

DON ASLETT

Is there life after housework?



A revolutionary approach to free you
from the drudgery of housework

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DON ASLETT

SEXLEY

We (my favourite housekeeper and I) dedicate this book to Gladys Allen, who ironed out the wrinkles and removed the cobwebs from the script.

We also give our sweeping thanks to John Preston Creer who waxed the idea of the book, to Clark Carlile who dusted away any doubts we could do it, to Ernie Garrett and Anne Montague, who mopped up the English, to Mark Browning who polished the style and to artist David Lock who decorated the pages.

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The Housework Manifesto

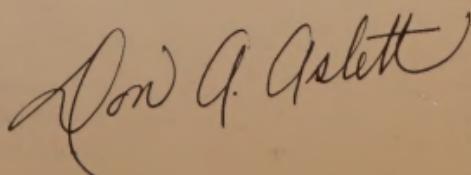
A neat, clean, and organized home is not a luxury or an option. It is an obligation — not to your house, your family, or your neighbours, but to you.

You aren't working life away to please your windows, or to satisfy your house; you are living for fulfilment: personal joy and happiness. Your home is an extension of your personality. It is a mirror to the world of what you are. The conditions within the walls of your home, immaculate or sloppy, are an admission of how you view yourself as a person. They will not only reveal your personality, and emotional and mental outlook, but will be instrumental in your motivation for personal success or failure in all you do.

The basic disciplines and principles you apply in your homemaking will, in a quiet yet penetrating way, project your personal character.

You are entitled to a life of love, fulfilment, and accomplishment, but you will find these rewards almost impossible to obtain if you spend your life thrashing and wallowing in a muddle of housework.

It may be your responsibility to maintain your home, but it is by no means your total destiny. Long, grinding, unrewarding hours of toil are not necessary. Within each of you is the ability to reduce the chores of housekeeping. Once this ability is applied, the long hours of drudgery will disappear. Your home and your life will assume a spirit of order. And you will experience a freedom you have never known before.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron A. Aslett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "R" at the beginning.

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A clean house

How does everyone else do it?

Some lie . . .

Some have amazingly lumpy carpets . . .

Some have no children . . .

Some have an au pair . . .

Some browbeat their husbands to do the work . . .

Some use only one room in the house . . .

Some never let anyone in . . .



Most of us don't use any of these methods to clean our houses. We represent the ninety five per cent of homemakers who, often in a state of cobweb confusion at the end of the day, wonder 'How does everyone else do it?'

Every time we read or hear of another clean-and-organized success story, we end up depressed and frustrated. We try the miracle formulas, quick tips, and super systems. When we find ourselves still not progressing in the war against grime, grit, and grubbies, we again wonder why it works so well for others. 'Something is surely wrong with me!' we conclude.

Psychological theory says, 'A dominant reason for depression, dissatisfaction, and lack of self-esteem among

women today is their gross error in overestimating the homemaking attainments of other women.' Overestimation of what other women get done is helped by the superwoman stories we often get from television adverts and newspaper stories. The media, of course, are ever anxious to package and present any 'news' the most dramatic way possible, hence even the most mundane things get romanticized. The hearer, reader, or observer can only gasp in astonishment and try to suppress that shrinking feeling of inadequacy: 'Look what she's done! What's wrong with *me*?'

Slick magazines and bestselling authors have tried to provide all the answers for a 'perfect' home – and have

convinced too many homemakers they don't have a chance. This constant bombardment of get-clean-and-organized propaganda leaves millions of women wondering, 'What's wrong with my system? Why am I the only one failing?' There is nothing wrong with you or any woman who is struggling to fulfil her responsibilities in the running of a home. Housework is, for a fact, never-ending and little appreciated. There are no superwoman homemakers. Most women are barely managing, meeting daily crises and demands, just like you are, wondering too what's wrong with them. It is amazing that for the most complicated life-affecting job on earth, housekeeping, little or no training is provided.

The wonder woman articles, books and commercials are a failure if their intent is to inspire the homemaker to rise to maximum efficiency. Gimmicks, hints, formulas, or magic schedules for 'living happily ever after' are not the answer. Overestimating or underestimating your abilities in any situation feeds the monster of discouragement. When you are doing your best but see yourself falling short of your goals, it's hard to have a bright outlook or a sense of accomplishment. I assure you there are some proven methods of becoming the owner of a clean house. They don't hinge on magic, good luck, or genies in a can of cleaning liquid. You can, by applying some professional skills, approaches, and determination, reduce your household chore time by as much as seventy-five per cent. My confidence in you and in this statement is anchored in twenty-five years as a professional housecleaner — and teaching and listening to thousands of women talk about their cleaning.



A housecleaner is born

Fresh off the farm and unappreciative of my mother's labours to provide me with hearty meals, ironed shirts, and a clean bed, I found university life a far cry from a comfortable home. My appreciation for that home and mother became keener when I discovered how much it took of my time and money to support myself in the world. For survival, I landed a job bottling fizzy drinks for 35p per hour, my first non-farm job. After deductions, the money left was definitely not enough to get me through university. So I looked for a better-paying, part-time pastime.

Cleaning gardens and houses looked like a lucrative endeavour, so my career as a world renowned housecleaner was launched. Following afternoon classes, I would dress up in a white uniform and knock on doors asking if I could assume some of the ladies' household drudgery. I received only a few sneers before I was snatched from the street and given an oven-cleaning job, followed later by some floors, then some windows. On every job, the women would watch and direct me, and I would scrub, shovel and polish. Next came wallpaper cleaning, wall washing, and cupboard cleaning. Word got out that there was an eager housecleaner on the loose in the neighbourhood, and soon I had more work than I needed. I hired help, taught them what the women had taught me, and the business grew. Carpet and upholstery cleaning were added to my list of skills. Soon my business was a large one, in demand in several other towns.

In the next ten years, into which I crowded five years of study, my unique housecleaning business received much public recognition - 'College Boy Makes

Good.' And between newspaper headlines I acquired a vast amount of experience in housecleaning methods. I ruined grand-piano tops, pushed over china cabinets, broke windows, streaked walls, suffocated pet birds with ammonia, ruined murals, shrank living room carpets into bedside rugs, and made hundreds of other goofs. But with each job I got better, faster, and more efficient (at cleaning, not breaking). I cleaned holiday homes with no mod. cons. and the plunghiest mansions in the country. Some days I would have five housecleaning crews in operation and would clean several three-storey homes from top to bottom in less than a day.

Cleaning skills were not the only talents needed to run the company. Organization was important. All of us working in the business were full-time students, were active in church and community, or were the heads of large families.

Barbara and I had six children in seven years. While operating my business and getting a degree, I put in three years in athletics and was in the debating team. Because my co-workers and I had no alternative, we *had* to develop efficient methods to clean houses. I was continually fortunate to receive much opinionated coaching and direction from every homemaker for whom I worked.

In these years of field experience in housecleaning and house organizing is based my confidence that I can show you how you can attain a greater level of housecleaning efficiency. Although I now serve as a consultant providing building efficiency and maintenance specifications for the world's largest companies, I know that the homemaker faces some of the most difficult problems of all - a fact not often realized or

appreciated. Housework is not just housework, as most 'outsiders' think. Housework is something every woman is expected to do after homemaking.

This is why I prefer to use the word 'homemaker' rather than 'housewife'. 'Housewife', like 'char', has come to mean someone who slaves away doing all the menial, boring work in society. 'Home' in homemaker is better than 'house' in housewife because a home is the most personal, important place for us all. 'Making' implies too that the job can be creative, important and fun. Making a home a gracious welcoming happy place is more central to life than any high-powered industrial or office job.

I once viewed, with a certain critical eye, my wife and other women struggling feverishly to get their housework finished. I ached to jump in and show those 'disorganized girls' how an expert could cope with ease. Soon the opportunity, along with a great lesson, came to me. Fresh out of university, I worked hard washing walls late at night to buy my wife a surprise plane ticket. She was delighted to have her first flight ever and a chance to see her mother again. I bade her farewell and told her to stay as many weeks as she wished, and that I would care well for our six small children. She wasted no time leaving, I assure you. Like most men, my true thoughts were, 'Now that I have her out of town, I'm really going to shape up this disorganized house and make it as efficient as my business!'

I woke up at four the first morning and confidently mapped out the campaign of great household efficiency which was about to be enacted in our home. By 6:30 the kids were up, and they saluted before they went to the bathroom. By 7:30, the

beds were made and the dishes were done and I was rolling to victory. We were putting the finishing touches on a new home, and my project for the day was the construction of a wall cabinet in the master bathroom – an easy half day's work. I had just started to glue the first board when 'Waaa!' One of the kids had biffed the other. I ran out and made peace, passed out the storybooks, and again picked up the hammer and board. 'Waaa!' – someone burned a finger. Three Band-Aids and ten minutes of comforting and antiseptic dabbing later I again picked up the hammer (after I had scraped off the now-dry glue) and had one nail started when 'Waaa!' – a nappy to change (a cry which was repeated all day; I'd have sworn we had four in nappies at the same time). Again I returned to work, and had started the second nail, when *ding-dong* (the milkman), then *ding-dong* (the postman), then *ring-a-ling* (the school telephoning – Laura forgot her dinner money). Then *knock-knock* – 'Can I borrow . . .' Then *buzz* – time for lunch . . . *ding-dong* . . . time for bottles. 'Waaa!' – nappies again, etc., etc., etc. You would not believe how my morning went. (Or would you?) My building project looked like a chimpanzee special – dried glue and badly cut boards were all over, and nothing had really been accomplished. Noon came and another surprise; those little monsters don't appreciate what you do for them; all that work cooking and they threw food, slobbered, and not one of them thanked me . . .

Nap time came, and would you believe little kids don't all go to sleep at the same time? I've bedded down six hundred head of cattle easier and faster than those six kids. When I finally got them all

down, no way was I going to hammer, play the stereo, or even turn a page and risk waking one of them. Fortunately, the day ended just before I did. I had two boards up on the cabinet by the time the last baby was ready to sleep at midnight. The most famous housecleaner and best organizer this decade... had accomplished nothing. I was so tired and discouraged. The day before I'd bought seven vans and expanded my company into a new area – but that day, nothing!

The next morning, I again woke at four and decided again I was going to run things like my business. I'd change all the nappies ahead for the whole day. But it didn't work. Leaving out all the gory details of the next few days, my half-day cabinet job, only half-complete, bit the dust. A week later my wife called to check on things. I pinched all the kids to get them howling in the background so I wouldn't have to beg her to come and save me. She did return at once, and I suddenly got efficient again.

Since this experience, my compassion, respect, and appreciation for the homemaker has grown considerably. In preparing the material for this book I have tried to keep in mind the hundreds of other jobs the homemaker must perform simultaneously. Housework *can* be shortened, and there is life after housework, but there is also life *during* housework, which must go on. Some laundry, some shopping and cooking, and some mending will always be required.

Big houses are proportionately easier to clean than small ones, new houses are easier than old, so exact methods or plans don't always work. Women trying to follow and pattern their lives after others are eventually disillusioned... like the

determined woman who tried a simple 'foolproof' formula for keeping children from getting their dirty fingerprints all over the wall. She had read a 'how to run a perfect home' article which said 'Take Johnny, sit him down and say, 'Johnny, if you wash your hands three times a day, Mummy will give you a 10p rise in your pocket money.'

Immediately the woman called her dirty-fingered son in and presented the proposal to him. 'I promise,' said the son. And he kept his promise of washing his hands three times a day. But the spots were still on the wall. The mother observed her son one morning, and indeed, he was keeping the bargain. He went to the sink and washed his hands and dried them, then repeated this procedure twice more while still at the sink. Then he left to play in the dirt.

If you are offended by the gorgeous TV housewife dressed in expensive evening clothes who flips her pearl necklace out of the way to mop the floor with Magic Glow, you are not alone. I feel ill watching the exaggerations of how well cleaning methods and material work when applied to a house where everything is already perfect. Occasionally a well-groomed dog ambles through the place or an immaculate kid or two tiptoe past, after which the 'super-smelling clean-all,' applied effortlessly, takes over. Don't be discouraged while you watch. Something is wrong with them, not you.

Miracle formulas, tricks, gimmicks, and solutions aren't the answer, and if they haven't worked for you, don't let it bother you, because the key to freedom from housework isn't there. The first principle of effective housework is not to have to do it. Being able to do it well is

great, but it's greater not to have to do it at all. Your real goal is to *eliminate* all of it you can. In this book I'll show you how to get rid of a great load of it, and the rest I'll show you how to take care of quickly and efficiently.

Household hints won't do it for you, but you can do it for yourself. The housewife who does housework just to get it done is like the teacher who wades through one confused, disorderly, unmotivated class after the other, waiting to be saved by the bell. Getting 'finished' with any housework chore is a worthwhile goal, but doing it in teeth-gritting agony is self-defeating. There are 'have-to' jobs no matter how good we are (bath tide-marks, fingerprints). You'll never escape them. However, when you learn to minimize the time you spend on the have-to jobs, you'll finally be able to get to the 'extra jobs' and they'll both become more pleasant, I promise. There is life after housework – and if you do it right, there can be life *during* housework.

Once you start finding the extra time that once was all spent on housework, nothing in your home will be mediocre or dull. You'll rip down anything that is faded or ugly and replace it with the prettiest, the most colourful, most refreshing things you can find or make. You'll throw out or sell things that don't fit in. If something is torn or worn or forlorn, you'll look forward to taking care of it, not as a chore, but as a chance to better yourself or others. You'll want to mend it, because it will be mending *you*. Once you have time, you'll be inspired to repair it if it sags, refinish it if it's dull. The real struggle before was not in the chore or item you had to service, it was the hopeless feeling that there was never any time for it. A lot of 'little' things that

need to be done really aren't work once you can get to them – and once you really believe that you can, you'll start looking forward to them. That's life *during* housework.

At the housecleaning lectures I've given across the country, I've passed out thousands and thousands of registration cards with a space left for comments, special requests, or housecleaning wisdom. This was written on one (can you detect a worry this person might have that you don't?): 'I must tell you, I love to clean. I have a clean house and I've been using the same techniques you use for years now. Everything in my house looks good, but my husband accuses me of being lazy because I don't exhaust myself every day like his mother did. I make lots of handicrafts and pillows and things, and he can't get over the fact that everything is clean and yet I still have time to skive off. He is honestly upset. He thinks I don't work enough and have too much fun.'

You can't win 'em all. You'll discover in your worrying about how other people do it that ninety per cent of the time you are overestimating their results. Even in the cartoon world, Wonderwoman in all her glory never raised children, calmed a husband, or cleaned and managed a house. Wonderwoman faced only criminals, not housework horrors. You can be as much a Wonderwoman as anyone you'll meet or read about, if you will only learn to harness your own resources. Not many others are more efficient or have a neater house than you.

By following the simple secrets in this book, you'll become even more efficient, and will have more time to enjoy life after housework.



Old wives' tales

Ever hear these?

'I paint every year. It's cheaper than cleaning.'

'Never shampoo carpets when they're new; they get dirty faster.'

'Spring is the time to clean.'

'Toothpaste and peanut butter remove black marks.'

'Start washing from the bottom of the wall and work upwards.'

'Always clean one room at a time.'

'Newspapers are the best polishing material.'

'Dried bread crumbs clean wallpaper.'

Some of these might possibly work, but why go the long way around to get the job done? Spring is not the best time to clean a house inside, late autumn is. Who wants to be cooped up with paint and ammonia fumes, when springtime blossoms are fragrant? Painting isn't cheaper than cleaning; cleaning averages sixty to seventy per cent less. Carpets don't get dirty faster after the first shampooing, if you do it correctly, and newspapers are not good for polishing (only for training puppies). Toothpaste and peanut butter remove marks because



they are abrasive, but they also cut the shine of good gloss paint, and the resulting dull patch looks worse than the original mark.

For centuries, secrets of wonder cleaning brews have been passed on to young housewives. These formulas are tried unsuccessfully and on deathbeds are whispered to the next generation. Hence, even in this day of modern science, well-educated homemakers living in modern homes are still using dried frogs' legs to remove inkstains from their carpets and vinegar-soaked cottage cheese to polish

brass doorknobs.

I have yet to find a magic cleaner or solution that will do all the work in cleaning a house. Less than two per cent of the old wives' tales whispered to me by hundreds of women ever worked. And there is no magic in the bottle, either. The 'cleaning cyclone' that whips out of the container isn't interested in cleaning for you when it is earning £20,000 for a minute on TV. Even if that solution – or any solution – is as good as advertisers say it is, it will have little effect on your cleaning time.

Forget most of the old wives' tales and commercials that you have heard and follow some of the simple professional methods that have been used efficiently and safely for decades.

Whatever you do, don't feel it's your economic duty to mix your own money-saving concoction. Some of the results are ridiculous. For example, it's easy to make your own glue, isn't it? Just find an old cow, kill it, and cut off as many hooves as you need for as much glue as you want. Grind them up in your trusty blender, then add... It's not worth it when you can spend 30p and get something better. Besides, it's cheaper than finding a cow and not nearly as messy as killing one. Women trying to make their own home-brew furniture polish will spend three hours of their time rounding up the materials and mixing up a solution that costs £2.20p for ingredients alone instead of buying a commercial polish for 99p which is tested, safe, and guaranteed not to rot, explode, or poison. Remember, it is your *time* that is valuable. Half-a century of professional cleaners' records show that out of every pound spent on cleaning, only 8p is for supplies and equipment, and almost the

same ratio holds true in the home. Your time and safety are the valuable commodities, not the supplies. Don't spend your precious hours grinding and rubbing trying to get vinegar to perform like soap. Vinegar is not a cleaner, it's a rinsing agent. The squeak is what turns you on.

Calculating this from a 'free me from housework' angle, it means that using good, efficient, and even expensive supplies and equipment is a cheap way to go if it cuts your time down. For example, if you pay £12 for a gallon of wax, it is a good buy if its quality is such that whatever you apply it to requires only annual or biennial cleaning and waxing.

What's a woman to do? If you can read, you can forget the witch potions and the glamorously packaged, overpriced household cleaners you've been using. The Yellow Pages of the phone directory usually list Janitorial Suppliers. These are (generally) wholesale outlets where commercial cleaning companies buy many of their supplies. (This is where to find the items I refer to in this book and that can't be bought at the supermarket or hardware store.) The rest they buy at the local supermarket, same as you do. The prices at janitorial supply houses vary with the policy, but I've never run into one that would not sell to the public. (See Equipment Chart, page 21.)

A woman's household tools are her power tools. A gross injustice is usually inflicted on women in this area. Over and over, I see situations where women are using an old rattletrap vacuum hardly capable of running, let alone sucking up any dirt. The hose is full of holes, the cord is worn and offers instant electrocution if touched in the wrong place. Every

day wives wrestle with these machines to do the housework, while in the cellar or garage sits a £400 radial-arm saw or £60 power tool which the husband doesn't use or hasn't used in six months. The man needs these macho tools to give his masculinity an occasional boost – while the woman fights an unsafe, ineffective vacuum for hours... every day. Husbands' cupboards are full of expensive rods which the men use one or two days a year, while their wives are cooking three square meals on an electric stove with worn-out switches, or mending sheets on a twenty-year-old single-stitch sewing machine... daily. Even the woman's junk drawer (you know, that drawer with all the parts, spare tools, lids, screws, handles, matches, nails, etc.) is used more by the man than the drawer in his £100 solid wooden work-bench.

In most cases, after an industrious project or two, men seldom use their expensive tools; as investments go, such tools are poor ones. A woman's time is her most valuable commodity, and good housecleaning tools and equipment can save hundreds of hours a year. Husbands and wives should take a serious look around their houses. The tools likely to be used most and those capable of saving the most time are the ones that should be purchased. Avoid trinket attachments to cleaning machines or appliances of any kind. Stick to solid tools and supplies.

Which supplies to use: where and when?

I will outline these as we cover each area of cleaning. Just remember this: there is no magic in the bottle or machine. The basics of effective cleaning are extremely simple. I have listed on the

chart at the end of this chapter the basic professional tools which you will find useful. I would consider a home well prepared for cleaning and maintaining efficiently if equipped with the items that appear there.

Proper supplies — big returns

There are more benefits from using the right equipment and supplies than merely doing a (1) faster and (2) better job. There are: (3) safety – you will be using fewer, simpler items that will be safer for you and children to use and store; (4) cost – you will spend seventy-five per cent less money on cleaning supplies if you select and use them properly; (5) depreciation – using proper cleaning supplies and tools reduces damage and deterioration of the surfaces and structures you're cleaning; (6) storage – few bedsits, flats or, for that matter houses – have enough storage space.

If your cleaning cupboard is full of fancy cans and bottles – Zippo, Rippo, Snort, Rubb Off, Scale Off, Goof Off – I promise a roomier cupboard when you learn the secrets of proper cleaning. Many of these chemicals and cleaners crammed into every cupboard and under every sink are not that effective for cleaning. They are safety hazards for children. Many are damaging to household surfaces and they all take up valuable storage room.

Canned expense: The aerosol can has pressured itself into the lives of all. Mouth freshener, deodorant, gold paint at Christmas – just about everything comes in aerosol, because we've been convinced it takes too much effort to do any more than push a button. We have

carried this principle over into our housecleaning systems, paying pounds for pennies' worth of cleaners and compressed gas. Some aerosols are convenient enough to justify buying them, but for the most part, you don't get your money's worth in mileage or quality. To replace most of the aerosols you use, go to the hardware shop and buy four or five reusable plastic spray bottles. Buy your chemicals, cleaners, and disinfectants concentrated, in gallons if possible. Mix them with water at the suggested dilution ratios and put the solutions in the spray bottles. Label the bottles with a waterproof pen or make sure each chemical is a different colour, lest you end up cleaning windows with upholstery shampoo. These plastic spray bottles are unbreakable, durable, won't nick cupboards and are extremely efficient and economical to use.

When using any kind of cleaner, commercial or household, *read the label*. Don't sniff to see what's in the jug; a rose will never smell the same if you ever get a strong whiff from a commercial ammonia bottle. And be sure to dilute cleaners properly. Our tendency is to say, 'If a little does a good job, a lot will do better.' This is as erroneous as saying, 'If a teaspoon of salt or baking powder will help the biscuits, then a cup of each will help them a lot more.' We often gluggy-glug-glug too much soap in the water and actually destroy the suspension and cutting action of the chemical. Read the directions before pouring. Remember, you don't clean alone. You have two helpers, water and chemicals; they will do most of the work.

Miracle solutions and magic tools aren't the only carry-over from old wives tales. Household advice columns are



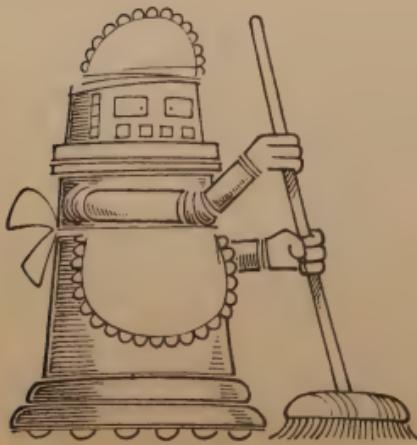
everywhere in newspapers and magazines. 'Helpful hints' often only help add frustration. Out of a recent 'Forty Ways to Save Time in the Home' article, I found only one tip that was beneficial. Many of them if applied to my operation would result in chaos and bankruptcy. Be discerning, check sources, and use your head in choosing housecleaning advice.

You can get by without the kind of advice that always says things like 'buy a second-hand vacuum cleaner for upstairs' and 'colour-coordinate all your bathrooms so the towels will match anywhere and things will be pretty for unexpected company'. What you need to learn most of all is how to choose and use supplies and materials so as to use fewer hours of your time to do better quality house-cleaning. I will explain how to accomplish this as we cover each major cleaning area in detail.

Now... to dispel one last and most

famous old *husbands'* tale: the value of a woman's time. On this earth, no one's time is worth any more than anyone else's. I used to send my wife to town or on errands to do the piddly things because my time was worth 'so much' – after all, I could get £25 to £50 an hour for consulting jobs. I was way off target. *Any woman's time is worth what any man's is.* Time, calculated in terms of the ability to appreciate, to feel, to love, to experience, is of equal value to all human beings. Pay per hour or position doesn't dictate how much a person's time is worth. Anything that can be purchased to save time in housework is just as important as a new computer for the business. So go out and start buying!

By the way – did you know that a paste of strawberries and wheat germ, ground glass, and baking soda will polish the bottom of a Boy Scout's cooking pot? (But so will a 5p scouring pad.)



Equipment chart

There is life after housework – provided you use the right cleaning equipment and cleaning agents. Forget about supermarkets and stores which stock badly designed and ineffective tools. Professional cleaners zip through several three-storey buildings in a day – because they use professional equipment.

Throughout the country there are janitorial supply houses which provide contract cleaners with all their needs. These firms are listed in the yellow pages of the phone directory under Janitorial Supplies. Telephone before making a visit because some firms specialise in, say, catering equipment or cleaning chemicals and may not have a general selection of goods. Other firms may not keep certain items such as mats in stock – but they will order for their customers. We have not found any janitorial supplier who will not sell direct to the public.

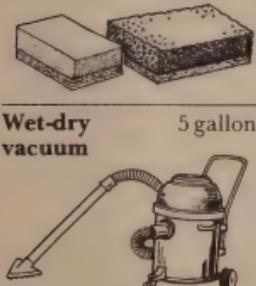
But sometimes there may be a minimum order stipulation or you have to buy large containers of a disinfectant cleaner or a polish. The Janitorial Suppliers Association (JANSA), (1 The Glebe, Worcester Park, Surrey KT4 7PG. Tel: 01-330 5970), keeps a list of members and may be able to help to put you in touch with your nearest supplier.

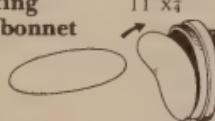
If you have difficulty you can obtain most of the items by mail order from Diswinco Supplies Ltd, Southsea Road, Kingston-on-Thames, Surrey KT1 2EJ. Tel: 01-546 1140/1191. They supply all the products on this chart, except those marked with an asterisk*.

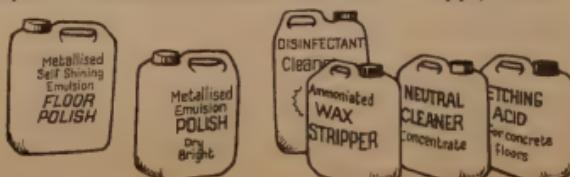
The basic janitorial cleaning compounds described in this chart and throughout the book do not all have childproof lids – so make sure you keep them out of the reach of small children.

ITEM	SIZE	TYPE	USE	SOURCE
Kentucky mop	16 oz.	yarn with clip-on handle	Used for all hard-surface floors (concrete too). Heads can be changed in seconds.	janitorial supply house
Dustmop	18"	cotton with rotating (or movable) handle	All hard floors. Fast and efficient; lasts for years. Treat occasionally with dust mop oil – 1 bottle will last 6 years. Launder and re-treat when saturated with dirt.	janitorial supply house
Mopbucket	2½/3 gallons	metal or plastic with self-contained roller wringer	With self-contained roller for wringing (saves hand injuries) used for mopping, wall washing, mixing, and a punch bowl at a cleaner's wedding. Wheels can be dangerous.	janitorial supply house

ITEM	SIZE	TYPE	USE	SOURCE
*Cleaning cloth	9" x 18"	white towel cloth (cotton)	Replaces the rag – used for all cleaning jobs; especially effective in wall and ceiling cleaning. Fold and turn inside out for 16 cleaning surfaces. Made at home from towelling. (See instructions page 101.)	white towelling from some good department stores
Dry sponge	5" x 7" x $\frac{1}{2}$ "	chemically treated rubber	Use on flat wall and ceiling surfaces and wallpaper – fold in hand under knuckles for even use. Discard when black or soiled. Keep it packaged when stored. Never get it wet.	only from Diswinco
Toilet brush	4" x 6"	black nylon	To scrub inside the toilet bowl to keep it free of hard water mineral deposit build up.	janitorial supply house
Spray bottle	2 pints	plastic, trigger spray	To fill with diluted concentrates for hand-spray work on spots, bathroom, windows and any small cleaning duty. Several of these around the house would be a good investment. Smaller sizes are less efficient but easily available.	janitorial supply house
Squeegee	12" or 14"	brass or stainless steel Ettore	Strictly for window cleaning. Avoid contact with rough surfaces to keep rubber blade perfectly sharp. A telescopic pole, for extending the handle, is obtainable.	janitorial supply house
*Bowl swab	3" ball cotton	wooden handle	Used to force water out of toilet bowl and to swab the bowl with cleaner. (See pages 116/117.) Difficult to find. Some toilets can be emptied by plunging with a brush. Can be home-made.	janitorial supply house
*Elbie Dustless Duster	20" x 20"	treated cloth	Used for dusting. The cloth is specially treated so that it collects dust without scattering. There is no need to shake out the cloth and it does not leave an oil residue. Supplies can be ordered direct from Batley & Co. Tel: 061-480 3880.	some hardware stores and department stores

ITEM	SIZE	TYPE	USE	SOURCE
*Scrubbing sponge	3"x4"x1" 3"x6"x1"	pink/white or blue/white nylon	Use where limited abrasion is needed. Always wet before using. Squeeze - don't wring. Use Scotchbrite's pink sponge for delicate surfaces. Their blue sponge is good in bathrooms.	hardware or department store
Wet-dry vacuum	5 gallons	metal or plastic tank	 Use this for all hand-work vacuuming; to vacuum up water when scrubbing floor; for over- flows, spills. (Get squeegee, upholstery and edge-tool attach- ments with it.) You may choose a smaller model which is available in many electrical shops.	commercial models from janitorial supply house
Upright vacuum	12" 6 amps	commercial model with cloth bag	 Basically for carpet-rug vacuuming. Don't buy half a dozen attachments; get a long cord.	janitorial supply house
Doodlebug	5"x10" pad	hand tool with pad	 To clean edges of hard-surface floors. Wash out and dry after use. Different pads for tough, medium or light jobs.	janitorial supply house
Floor squeegee	18"	push-pull brass/stain- less steel	 For floor cleaning, removing water and drying paths or garage floors. Ettore brand. Replacement rubber blades available.	janitorial supply house
Mats	3'x4', 3'x5', or 3'x6' Rolls 3', 4' and 6' wide	Tufted nylon/ olefin fibre on vinyl/ rubber backing	 Use Jaymart's 'Tuf-n-Tidy II' or 'Caretaker' as entrance matting. Help to remove dust and particles from shoes and clothing, absorb mud and water from foot traffic. Available in different lengths 3', 4' or 6' wide - in various colours. Samples available from Jaymart, Tel: Westbury (0373) 864926.	order from janitorial supply house or carpet shops
Rotary floor machine	11" pad (45 lb)	Victor Sprite 11"	 For surface cleaning of carpets. Use with Insta-Lok Drive Board and Scotchbrite carpet pad (see above). For your nearest stockist contact Victor Floor Maintenance Ltd, Stockfield Road, Birmingham.	janitorial supply house

ITEM	SIZE	TYPE	USE	SOURCE
Buffing pad/bonnet	11" x 4" 	white nylon (3M)	For use under a rotary floor machine (see page 23) to clean carpet surfaces. The pad is used with 3M carpet shampoo.	janitorial supply house
Concrete seal	5 litres 	resin based or inorganic-chemical based	Used to seal floor so that concrete dust is not continually trodden into other areas of the house. Concrete paint/seal is available in many colours.	janitorial supply house, builders' merchants
Etching acid	5 litres	concentrate	For cleaning and etching a concrete floor before sealing. For removing both surface lime and dirt. Note: A strong concentrated alkaline cleaner can be used instead.	janitorial supply house, builders' merchants
Disinfectant cleaner	5 litres	concentrate/ quaternary	Dilute with water for use in bathroom cleaning or mopping wherever sanitation is essential. It is a neutral cleaner and can be used for general household jobs.	janitorial supply house
Neutral cleaner	5 litres	concentrate without disinfectant	For mopping, damp-mopping, spray cleaning paintwork, cleaning panelling and all general cleaning where a disinfectant is not needed. Also for removing fingermarks from furniture.	janitorial supply house
Wax remover/ stripper	5 litres	ammoniated	To remove wax from a floor. Apply generously with mop onto the floor. You will need to use a Doodlebug or floor machine to dislodge the old wax.	janitorial supply house
Furniture polish	standard aerosol can	water or oil wax emulsion aerosol	Use spray polish only where finish does not maintain its own lustre. Sparkle or Mr. Sheen are aerosols of this special kind.	supermarkets, hardware stores
Emulsion floor polish	1 gallon or 5 litres	metallised dry bright liquid	Hard floor surfaces, tiles, linoleum and sealed concrete.	janitorial supply house



Energy



... or organisation?

Is it organization or your energy level...

'I get the feeling at the end of every day that I haven't got anywhere and I'm not ever going to get anywhere...' This was the comment of a beautiful blond mother with a brand-new house and four small children. She rather concisely summed up a basic problem concerning homemaking efficiency and accomplishment. Understanding your responsibility but feeling that you lack the skill or direction to fulfil it often creates total discouragement. Even if you know what the rewards of total effort will be, constantly thinking you aren't getting there will begin to prevent you from *wanting* to get there.

The big magic word

The sacred, magic word to homemakers, business managers – in fact, all of us

– is *organization*. If we could organize ourselves correctly, we could do anything (so we think). We spend a great deal of time trying to organize ourselves like the superwoman and superman formulas say we should, but still seem to get little accomplished. We subconsciously imagine that organizing is going to do it for us. This is wrong. There is no organization that gives the answer or does the work. Is there hope? Yes, and this bit of good news will start this chapter off right – women are better organizers than men. I say so, and if you ask any boss, school principal, or leader, who organizes best, they will agree with me; *women* do.

There is no one best way to organize. Organization is an ever-changing process; it's a journey, not a destination. Every minute of every day a new approach is being thought up. Everyone is different in makeup, energy, concept of

reality, principles, proportions, race, or origin; every situation requires a different style of organization to get the job done. The secret isn't in getting organized – it's in wanting to get the job done and committing oneself to do it. Once that is achieved, everything will fall into place. You can organize as well as anyone if you want to or have to. There isn't any set way to do anything. You don't have to eat a dessert after a meal – you can eat it before. Your system of organization should fit you personally. It should be patterned and tailored to fit your style, your energy, your schedule, and your motivation. You run your own life – the clock doesn't run it.

Some organizational myths. I'm convinced that everyone can be organized if she has to be and if she will stop trying to follow know-it-all methods and formulas for keeping a perfect house. For example, the efficiency experts give a foolproof method of attaining great accomplishments. They say, in essence, 'Sit yourself down and make a list of the things you want to accomplish. Put the most important ones first. When you get up in the morning, start on the first one and do not leave it or go on to the next one until the first one is finished. Then go on to the second one and likewise until you are finished with the list.' I can't imagine anyone being able to exist (let alone succeed) following that kind of organizational concept. It is grossly inefficient, non-creative, inflexible – not to mention no fun. I know many housewives who have been trying desperately to organize their lives and housework to fit this ridiculous concept, and they are paying dearly for it. They suffer endless frustrations because they can't make it work for them. If I followed that style of organiza-

tion in my business or personal activities, I'd be twenty years behind.

Look where trying to follow the 1-2-3-4 style of getting things done would lead you. Let's say you make a list of the following things to do this week (in addition to your regular chores):

1. Make the kids a birdbox.
2. Water the garden.
3. Memorize your part of the poem for the P.T.A. play.
4. Send Gran a birthday card.
5. Plant out the new lawn.

Enthusiastically, you tackle the five projects in the down-the-list style outlined by the efficiency experts. While in town, you pick up the bird box materials, and soon you get started on the box with full gusto; however, you forgot to get an adjustable bit to make a hole in the front of the birdbox. So, at a critical point, you are stopped. The 1-2-3 track compels you to leave the task and take time off to secure the needed tool, which you do at a cost of six miles of driving and two hours of searching. You then paint an undercoat on the nesting box, wait a day for it to dry, and then the second coat goes on. After two days, task one is at last finished, so out to the garden next. You turn on the water. Four hours later the water is finally down the rows and task number two is finished. Next you go into the house for a few hours to memorize the poem, item number three on the list. Grandmother's card, item number four is then picked up at the store, brought home, signed and addressed, then taken to the post office. To put a hero's touch on task number five, you pick up a book on lawns, work on the lawn for the last three days, and you are finished with all your projects in one week.

Efficiency experts might have a week

to spend to do all this, but you don't and neither do I. The tasks could easily be done in a day or more, of course, with a little daydreaming time on the side. How? By relying on your own creativity and a more flexible system. While in town, before anything is started, pick up the card for Grandmother. While driving to get the birdbox materials, mentally build it so that you'll be aware of each thing that has to be picked up. While waiting for the man at the timber yard to round up the materials, chat with one of the staff about lawn seed and on this trip buy fertilizer, mulch, and seed for the anticipated lawn.

On the way home, turn off the car radio and start to memorize the poem. Once you get home, lay out the materials for the birdbox and build it. (Oops, we forgot the adjustable bit, too.) Let's stop the birdbox immediately and go and turn the water on for the garden, taking the poem with us to memorize while waiting for the water to get down the rows. Once the water is going, planting the lawn gets attention. Next, phone your friend asking her to send an adjustable bit for the birdbox home with your child who will soon be passing by on the way from school. Continue to work on the lawn until you reach an energy gap. After washing for supper, sign Grandmother's card so the children can take it to the post box on their way to school. When your child arrives with the adjustable bit, drill the hole and paint the birdbox. By this time, you are rested, so you tackle the lawn again. When tired, but finished, you come in and give the birdbox a second coat. By then it's late, but just time for another shot at the poem, and you've memorized it. Now all five things are completed in one day instead of a

week, and look at the time you have left for yourself.

Impossible to do all that in one day? No. And you can apply this same principle to housework if you rely on your skills and really want to get it done. Your freedom and ingenuity will produce creative energy. It's simply a matter of 'multiple track' organization. In housework, if you wait until one thing is completed before you start another, you'll take forever to finish and never get around to any freedom to enjoy life. Once you train yourself to the multiple-track system, thinking will be effortless. You'll just roll along accomplishing things. You won't have to drain your think tank or worry or sweat to organize. It will come naturally.

Here is the secret: the start and finish of a job are the difficult parts. So start the first project at once. As it gets rolling, begin the second. As the second gets into gear, attack the third.

By then the second one is done, so pounce on the fourth, fifth, and sixth, and if the third isn't done, start on the seventh. Don't start and finish any two tasks at the same time. Don't start one thing when you are finishing another. Start another project while you are in the middle of three or four, but don't start one at the end of another project. The multiple-track system is the correct way to run many projects at the same time. It's easy if you alternate starting and finishing times.

The way some women cook is a prime example of doing things the most efficient way. I've watched my grandmother, who had fifteen children, prepare eight different dishes for twelve people in just minutes - a miracle. But it isn't a miracle, it's just good organization and the multiple-track system. She sim-

ply got eight things going at alternate times, nothing starting or ending at the same time. You've done that, haven't you, when you had to? No sense waiting for water to boil, biscuits to rise, salads to cool, lard to melt. She simply used the waiting time productively.

I've watched a one-track mother with one small child crumple in total frustration trying to manage her baby. Five years, a couple of sets of twins and two singles later, she is doing a marvellous job. How? She learned the four- or five-track organization system and applied it. Your mind is capable of it and your body is, too. The success of this system is amazingly exhilarating, and once you master it, you'll use it beneficially in every area of your life.

A large percentage of our housecleaning time is spent putting out brush fires. If you take three seconds to close the door or gate behind you, you wouldn't have to spend three days hunting for your dog. Many people fail because all their efforts are spent taking care of problems that a little timely action would have prevented.

Too many housewives will spend twenty hours a year (and a lot of mental anguish) trying to remove felt-tip marker writing from walls, instead of a minute putting the pens out of reach of the kids — ten hours a year cleaning ovens or stove tops instead of fifteen minutes choosing and preparing a container that won't boil or slop over.

Simplicity vs. procrastination

A great deal of effort is expended as a result of failure to put in a simple timely effort. Here is a common everyday

example: doing the dishes later instead of right after the meal. Notice how a simple chore multiplies itself into an insurmountable obstacle of negative results and freedom-robbing discouragement. Do you take time, over and over, to cope with an unsatisfactory situation instead of correcting the underlying problem, like trying to adjust the tap just right so that the drip is minimized, angling and easing that sticky drawer for thirty seconds every time you use it so it will slide back in, wondering and experimenting every time a fuse blows — which mains switch is for the lights, which is for the heater, which is for the... I think you know what I mean.

The best organization is simply making a choice of when and how you are going to do things before they get out of hand and dictate to you how and when they will be done. Are you the slave or the master? Simplicity seldom goes hand in hand with procrastination. Do you clean up and put away things as soon as you have finished (simplicity), or do you throw them in a 'tidy' pile to be rummaged through as they are needed (procrastination)? It only takes a few minutes to iron a blouse. Do you do it before it is needed, or five tense minutes before you have to dash out of the door? Do you make your bed when you jump up (simplicity) or just before you go to bed again at night (procrastination)?





Fix the items that always slow you up.

Do you fill out that speaker's committee report when it's still fresh in your mind and will only take a few minutes; or do it when it's overdue? You've been strongly reminded to get it in, and now you've forgotten facts, mislaid evidence, have to write an excuse letter, etc.

The time between doing most things now and later compounds and multiplies problems. You end up spending time not simply getting the job done, but fighting and recovering from the problems created because you waited. Doing things when they take less time is not only good planning, it makes good sense, and will save enough energy and motivation to apply to more personally satisfying efforts than housework.

The ever-famous list

Lists are great. We all have our lists of things to do. I'd be lost without mine. We don't always do the things on the list, but they are always jotted down. At one time, my list spiralled to seventy six 'immediate' things to be done. It soon started taking all my time just to transfer the list

to a new piece of paper when the old one wore out. If your list follows the typical pattern, at the bottom are the hard, unpleasant things, such as:

38. Tell Jack he's redundant.
39. Lay the concrete on the path.
40. See the bank manager and ask for the loan.
41. Get my wisdom teeth extracted.
42. Speak to George about bathing more often.

or

19. Clean the oven.
20. Clean the greenhouse windows.
21. Volunteer to babysit Dennis the Menace.
22. Kick cousin Jack out of the front room.
23. Go through 70 old issues of *Good Housekeeping*.

We have to be careful with that villain list. We are often so proud of ourselves for even writing something down on our list of things to be done, we immediately relax. We say to ourselves, 'Wow, I'm glad I've started on that one.' After a few days we suddenly realize that nothing has been done, and we sneak a look at the list to see if that item has disappeared. It hasn't. We are so relieved to know that it wasn't forgotten, we leave it for a few more days. The day before the deadline, we have to face it, and generally we get the item done in half the time we feared it would take.

A list has one big value and that is getting things itemized and recorded before you forget them. That's all. As for using a list to discipline yourself, forget it. You have to *do* the things – the list will not do them for you. I dislike the regimentation of set timetables and believe they are only for inefficient people who are afraid they are going to run

out of things to do. Some budgeting of time and some planning is needed, but not to the extent that it dictates your every move and mood. You should run a timetable for your benefit, not the reverse. It can't be illustrated better than by a skit sent to me by homemaker Gladys Allen:

(Aslett arrives at the highly polished door of Mrs. Polly Programmed.)

Polly: (Wearing a huge watch on her arm, feather duster in hand. She's groomed and dressed immaculately.) Good morning Mr. Aslett, won't you please take off your shoes and come in. (Dusts him off lightly as he removes his shoes.) How nice to have a visitor drop by. I have six and a quarter minutes' relaxation time (checking her watch) before I have to knead the bread and water the sprouts.

Aslett: Mrs. Programmed, I see that you're busy... I just dropped by to invite you to a little efficiency lecture. (Sits down) As you know, Mrs. P...

Polly: (interrupting) Oh, Mr Aslett, would you mind sitting on this cushion? That one has already been sat on this morning. I like to alternate. The fabric lasts much longer that way.

Aslett: (Moving to another cushion.) Really? Now, I never would have thought of that.

Polly: My yes! My last couch lasted seventy eight days longer just by using that one little trick.

Aslett: What I've come to tell you, Mrs Programmed, is that I've come up with a great new idea for a housecleaning lecture, and I'd like to invite you to come and see it tomorrow morning at ten o'clock.

Polly: Ten o'clock Thursday? (Rushes to a big box labelled 'Daily Timetables'.)

I've just typed up my plans for the month. I'll have to check. (Pulls out a long folded sheet.) This is my timetable for Thursday. (Studies it carefully, consults watch, makes a few changes with a pencil.) Now what time did you say that would start tomorrow?

Aslett: Ten.

Polly: (Making a few more changes) Yes, yes, I think I'll be able to work it in after all. If I get up at five instead of six, I can have my laundry sorted and my scripture studies done by seven. I can get my curtains vacuumed and my children fed by seven forty-seven. While they practise their violins, I can shine the furniture and wash the dishes. They leave for school at eight nineteen which gives me just enough time to stir up a casserole for supper and get myself ready. Umm, Yes. I should be able to leave here by nine thirty-seven at the latest. By the way, Mr Aslett, what did you say your lecture will be about?

Aslett: (Stands up with a sigh, shrugs weakly, unable to speak.)

Highs and lows

The old up-and-down pattern is entrenched in our style of living. How devastating it is to human feelings and efficient housekeeping. 'Top of the world one day and down in the dumps the next' has been eased into an expected happy weekend and blue Monday. Most housewives unthinkingly roll along with this routine. We clean the house, water the plants, and everything just so and we are 'up'. Immediately the condition of spotlessness and satisfaction we have attained begins to erode as dust, spiders, children, animals, husband, and guests mount their attack. It's so frustrating, since we've expended so much dedica-



tion and energy getting the house to its previous peak.

One elderly gentleman, recalling his mother's approach to housework, said, 'She organized herself and family so that all the housework (washing, ironing, baking, sewing, etc.) was done on Monday (one day, mind you). What an accomplishment. But she spent the other six days recovering to prepare for the big Monday cleanup again.'

This kind of housecleaning approach palls very quickly and it gets you nowhere except an early grave. Even if your house is clean as often as it is dirty fifty-fifty, you'll not be rewarded fifty-fifty, because it's human nature to notice and respond to the negative, not the positive. Very little is heard about the house if it's clean, but if it's dirty, everybody squawks, criticises and complains. It's demoralizing, but you can't give up the battle. So you buckle down and restore your domain to order and cleanliness. Now hold it. Now that you've got your

house in top shape again, try something different.

A little *consistency* reduces the need for expending a lot of time, energy, and discouragement. Avoid the up and down style of housekeeping. Establish an *acceptable* cleanliness level and maintain it daily. If you really want to be freed from housework drudgery, this one change in style will work wonders for you. When you learn to keep house on a straight line, you'll not only find extra hours appearing, but some of the other up-and-down styles you've been struggling with for years (diets, meals, letter writing, PTA projects etc.) will follow your housecleaning system and suddenly begin to be manageable. Your home will never stay static. It will be in a constant state of flux, if it is used as all homes should be. Avoid extremes both ways – too much polish is just as off-putting as too little. Gold-plating a house won't reward you with anything but discouragement and worry.

...and lows...



Remember to relate your goals and organization to your own personal motivation or energy level. Add to that the conviction that what you have to do or want to do is really worth it, and organization will fall into place. You are a human being, not a machine. You don't start running at full efficiency the minute you're cranked up. If you try it, you are going to end up terribly discouraged. Don't work for a list or a timetable — fit everything to your emotional, physical, or mental state. By tying my energy level to production, I can churn out three magazine articles in an hour; I can't do one in eight hours

when I feel low. When I'm high, I tackle my most active and demanding work. When the energy gaps hit, I file, sort, or do something that requires no creativity or mental energy. In both situations, I am accomplishing a lot — I'm fitting the task to my mood and my personality. Be yourself and decide what is most important to you. Wade into it during your best hours for that particular chore, and a miracle will happen. (You might end up writing an organization book and selling it back to the superwomen of the world.)

Right now, I feel like writing chapter four.

Out with junk



Treasure sorting and storage strategy

While cleaning a large, plush home during my first year at university, I managed to wade through and clean an expensive, treasure-laden bedroom and embarked on cleaning the cupboard. In addition to the expected wardrobe of expensive wearing apparel, I had to move five exquisite cigarette lighters, forty-seven pairs of women's shoes (I'm not joking), a case of 1916 *National Geographic*, several tennis racquets, fourteen boxes of Christmas cards, six poodle collars, and numerous other items. It was a full but neat cupboard which was in harmony with the style of the lady who lived there. She was fifty-five years old. She possessed a fine home decorated with elaborate art and delicate tapestries

which she had spent part of her life collecting and the rest of her life cleaning and keeping track of. For thirty-five years, she had managed to keep her house clean and organized and all of her things dusted. This project of shuffling treasures around had taken her a lifetime.

Most of us are in the same condition as this owner of forty-seven pairs of shoes. Our treasures may not be expensive, but we have as many of them crammed in as many cubbyholes which we shuffle through, sort and re-sort, climb over, worry about, and maintain for hours on end. What does it contribute to our personal edification or lifestyle? Seventy per cent of it can simply and accurately be labelled JUNK. JUNK has frustrated more women than Robert Redford. JUNK has burned down more homes,

caused more ulcers and resulted in more arguments than can be imagined. In the meantime, shuffling and dodging around it continues to take a considerable toll of our personal freedom.

All for what reason? Accumulation? Sentiment? Security? Who knows?

The other thirty per cent of the 'things' that we have lying, kicking, and stored around are of some worth to us. Small, important items left over from sewing, plumbing, playing or a thousand other pastimes or projects can, at the right moment, be worth a hundred times their value. But remember, we're talking about thirty per cent of what we have. Why own a houseful of useless objects that rob you of time and energy?

The burden of junk

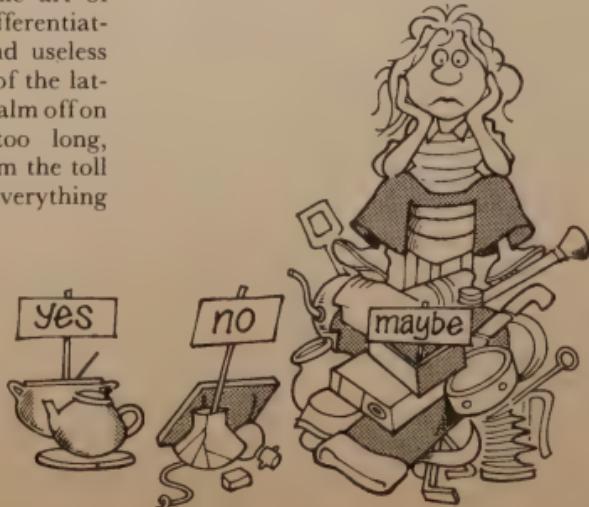
It is amazing how we get ourselves into the junk habit. As the Law of the Squirrel goes, 'Junk will accumulate proportionately to the storage room available for it.'

Before learning the shortcuts and professional methods of cleaning a house, we must first learn the art of treasure sorting. This means differentiating between valuable junk and useless junk and promptly disposing of the latter. It is a job that you cannot palm off on anyone else, or postpone too long, because there is no escape from the toll that junk takes of your life. Everything

stored away or hidden discreetly or indiscreetly is also stored in your mind and is subconsciously draining your mental energy. Once discarded, it is discarded from your mind, and you are free from keeping mental tabs on it. Second homes often do this to people who can afford them. The owners maintain them mentally and physically for the complete year and use them for a couple of weeks. If it were possible to calculate the emotions and affections, the caring and sharing energy that is silently burned up worrying about the home, it would surely outweigh the benefits of a couple of weeks or months occupying the dwelling.

Another burden junk thrusts on us is that we feel obliged to use it whether we need it or not. If we don't or can't use it, then we worry about why we have it at all. Junk will get you—don't sit there and argue with yourself that it won't.

The most valuable 'someday useful' junk will stymie your emotional freedom



if not handled properly. Inasmuch as all of us feel guilty and frustrated about our pile of junk, we have to eliminate the problem. In turn, it will eliminate an unbelievable number of housework hours.

The origin of junk

There is a reason that we stop using something: it is outdated, broken, unsafe, unattractive, or inoperable. This simply means that we don't need it any more except, of course, for sentimental value. As each day goes by, it becomes more outdated, more unsafe, more unattractive, and will remain broken and inoperable. So learn to follow the seventy-thirty law that a magazine publisher made famous. He held up an ordinary magazine and said, 'Look, seventy per cent of this magazine is advertising.' So anyone who has any magazines or papers lying in boxes or piles around the house has seventy per cent junk. The first time you read a magazine, remove any article of interest to you and throw the rest away. If you start doing this regularly, you'll rejoice in having eliminated those hernia-causing boxes of magazines. Instead of piles of magazines, you will have a thin, usable file of articles you want or need. Other junk can be treated the same way and you'll see a great transformation.

The tap leaks and the handles are corroded, so we replace them with a sleek new chrome beauty. Looking at the old ones longingly, we can't bear to throw them away because someday (even though they're broken, outdated, unsafe, unattractive, and inoperable) . . . we just might need a washer out of them. So we put them in the junk drawer or cupboard

or shelf or hang them in the garage to get tangled up in the bicycle spokes. We could have removed the washers in two minutes and thrown the rest in the dustbin saving hours of maintenance working around the old taps. What a mighty grip junk has on us. We'll keep that worthless worn-out tap for fifteen years, then in our move to Dover or London or Hatfield into a new house, guess what we take with us . . . yes, the old tap. We never know when we might need it.

No matter how we may rationalize, 'Oh well, there's nothing in the attic' or 'We have plenty of room in the basement' that junk should go to the dump. The number one secret of proper junk disposal or dispersal is to make the decision *at the time something is to be put away or stored*. Because once you store it, sentimental attachment and mental obligation to use it (to justify the storage) begin to mount. Another ruling factor in living efficiently with junk is facing reality as to just how much room is really available for storage. If you can't conveniently store an item, then logically you cannot use it conveniently. Often the storage cost is far higher than the replacement cost of an article.

The economics of storage

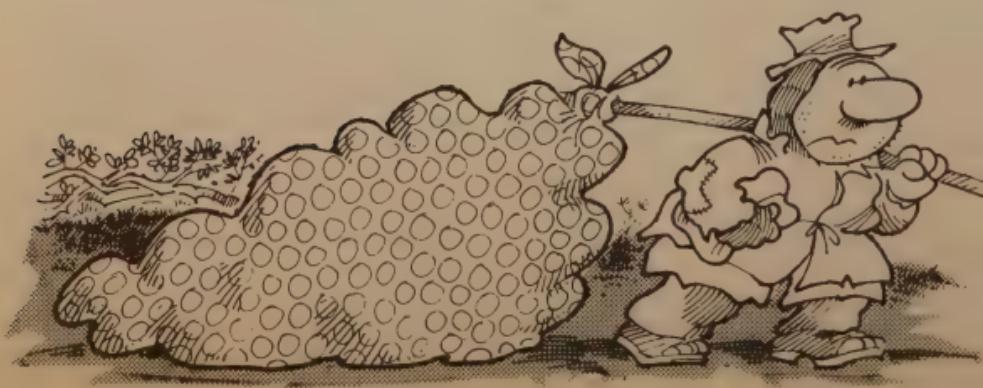
On a special contract assignment at a holiday resort one year, my company supplied decorated Christmas trees to the guests. The year before, the previous installers lost £3,000 providing the decorated trees because they hired carpenters and highly paid labourers to decorate and take down the trees. We contracted it the next year. We bought the Christmas decorations and the trees wholesale. When the holiday season was over, the cleaner would call our office and a crew

would pick up the trees, take off the light bulbs and metal stands, and pack and store them for the next year's use. When it all was totalled up, we lost only £550 the first year. Then we did some storage strategy thinking and the following year we made over £1,000 clear profit with half the headaches. What was our secret? We just followed the basic rule of storage economy. When the Christmas holiday was over, instead of picking the trees up, undecorating them, sorting and packing the decorations, transporting them to the warehouse, etc., we just threw out the entire tree—light bulbs, tinsel, stand and all—with the rubbish. The labour and storage costs saved more than we paid for the decorations!

Think about the storage problem in your home. A lot of that stuff you are storing is useless. It is a constant source of worry. Most of it is unsafe, outdated, and ugly, so why keep it? Why spend a valuable part of yourself polishing, washing, dusting, and thinking about it? **YOU CAN'T AFFORD JUNK.** It will rob you physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Freeing yourself from junk will automatically free you from housework (and it won't take any soap and water either). If you'll just de-junk your home, the time you have left over in the course of a year will be enough to complete and pay for that evening course you've always wanted to take. When I say de-junk, I don't mean sort your four chests of worthless stuff into ten bags of worthless stuff—or I'll tell on you!

Now don't say, 'Oh, I know my junk has got to go, and one of these days, I'm going to...' There are more reasons than housecleaning to de-junk your house (and your life). This might surprise you, but it's a reality: many people are buried so deep in junk that their mates are unable to navigate the clutter to get to them. Your spouse can't give you attention and affection until he or she can find you. I've cleaned (or tried to clean) hundreds of homes where lonely, frustrated men and women, buried in junk, can't understand why they and their families aren't closer. Junk is the barrier. Junk (and junk projects and activities) pre-



vents you from being free, available for affection or opportunity. Too often the things we save and store – for sentiment's sake or because they might be valuable someday – end up as tombstones for us. Boxes of mummified wedding cake and piles of corroded hub caps will bury you good and proper. Get rid of your junk!

To start your de-junking programme, begin with yourself. At an all-day course I convinced the entire audience that junk is a universal problem, not the 'other person's' problem. I gave every member of the audience two minutes to gather just the junk they were carrying with them (pockets – handbags – briefcases), offering a prize for the most unique collection of junk (they initialled it for proper identification). My son passed around a large drawer and in minutes it overflowed. What did I get, you wonder? (We all love other people's junk, don't we!) It was hilarious. It was all *junk!* Used flashbulbs, last year's diary, old speeding tickets, partly eaten chocolate-covered peanuts, a roll of toilet paper, two-year-old food receipts, rocks and

pebbles, expired credit cards, half a sock, Christmas lists (after, not before), broken compacts and empty lipstick containers, lids (censored), (even worse) – tons of it – and I suspect they held back plenty from me. The winning lady had enough to fill a bulging handkerchief... and she was the best-dressed woman there. *Junk is a reality.*

If having piles, rooms, or buildings full of junk (even labelled antique) is worth all those hours to shuffle it and all that mental energy to keep track of it, then unfortunately you value junk more than your time and freedom. If having a cupboard full of gleaming silver is worth four hours of polishing time a month, you enjoy impressing people more than you value your time and your freedom. The storage strategy message is simple: nothing exists in and of itself. Everything has a cost to acquire and to maintain. The majority of the cost you pay with your time and energy. Eliminate the junk and excess around your house. It's simple, and one of the easiest ways to free yourself from household imprisonment.



Tick before you begin

Some things aren't worth doing. Some can't be cleaned. Others will look tatty even when they're clean and orderly. Taking care of these items first will not only make cleaning and maintenance easier, but will make you feel better

(which is sure to make cleaning easier). Eliminate or remove anything that bugs you—that's inconvenient, no longer functional, or you just don't like. *REMEMBER—the first principle of efficient cleaning is to not have to clean in the first place—do these before you start:*

- Have plenty of convenient, roomy litter receptacles. You'll do less cleaning up and picking up.*
- Alter any physical surface or appearance that you don't like. Paint it, sand it, cover it, or give it away.*
- Eliminate furniture you don't use or need. It has no value and magnifies your cleaning chores.*
- Eliminate excess playthings (children and adults). Unused tennis rackets, dartboards, motor-bikes, TV games that have fallen from favour, old hobby supplies, puzzles with 'only one piece missing.'*
- Repair every dripping tap.*
- Make every door, drawer and window slide or close easily.*
- Adjust every shelf to suit what you want and need.*
- Make sure that you have enough towel racks.*
- Label all fuse boxes.*
- Get rid of all shin and head bumpers (countertops, cupboards, doors, and drawers that bash you every time you pass by, or straighten up).*
- Make sure all hanging cupboards have an adequate supply of hangers.*
- Get anything that can be mounted off the floor.*
- Repair/replace all damaged surfaces.*
- Make sure your vacuum works perfectly.*
- Make cleaning tools attractive. All other things being equal, choose tools that are attractive, in materials that appeal to you. Even if you can't afford oak and stainless steel, you can keep your cleaning tools sharp and nice by painting and decorating and personalizing them—use your imagination.*



What to expect from your husband and children





On this subject, I will gladly assume the role of the learner. When you find something that works the miracle of getting husbands and children to assume their rightful obligation in housework, I have left room for you to enter it in the book.

This lack of cooperation is a reality, all right... but it doesn't have to be. While doing a consultancy job for a large school district, I was shown a quiet primary school canteen. At the stroke of noon, 420 children converged enthusiastically on the polished dinner room with trays and brown bags. Forty minutes later the room was quieter again, but not polished. It looked like a tornado had feasted instead of humans. Forks, food, and wrappers decorated the floor, the tables, chairs, walls, and even the light fixtures. When we were finishing the building tour *two hours later*, I noticed the cleaner just finishing the job. *Two full thirty-gallon rubbish bins* were required to contain the mess the cleaners picked up from that hall. The next day we were touring a similar school in town. It was a primary school with the same floor plan, same area, and 412 students. This time we arrived about fifteen minutes after lunch ended—and the place was immaculate. A cleaning lady was scooping up what appeared to be the final dustpan of debris. I was told by the guide that not only was it the last dustpan, *it was the only dustpan*. This cleaner had spent fifteen minutes restoring the room and filled only a small pan of dirt, while the cleaner at the other school laboured two hours in the same area, after the same number of children, and accumulated two rubbish bins full. What was the difference? Same number of kids, same community, same size building – but... *not the same boss*.

It's not chance that causes you to have a litter bin house and spend two hours cleaning when you could spend fifteen minutes. It's you! The only difference between the schools was the principals. The first principal allowed his pupils freedom to eat and leave a mess; the other principal allowed his pupils the freedom of eating and simply added the responsibility of cleaning up their own mess. 'Any mess you make, you clean up' was the fair and simple rule. That meant crumbs, drops, and dribbles on tables, chairs, and floors. It took each kid fifteen seconds to perform the task and unquestionably taught and reinforced the most important ingredient of greatness: *responsibility*. Any woman who cleans up after a husband or a child over two years old deserves the rubbish she has to lug out every day.

I don't ordinarily suggest open rebellion or brute force, but I do offer these two suggestions:

1. Refuse to be the cleaner for the kids' and husband's messes. Picking up after them is bad for everyone involved. You teach irresponsibility perfectly by assuming responsibility for someone else, except those who don't know any better or can't help themselves. Insist that everyone cleans up his or her own messes and rooms. Don't send husband to work or children to school undisciplined.

2. Write down and display needs. When you demand or ask for help, many family members will begin to assist you. Written messages eliminate short memories and the innocent phrase 'I didn't know you needed anything done'.

Sorry I can't help you more on this one.

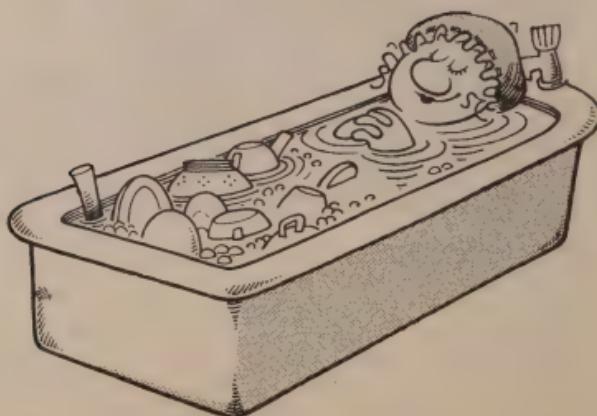
JOBS for this week	
Mum	Dishes
Dad	Rubbish
Tim	Beds
Sue	Vacuum
Gary	Dusting

Sue
 Give dog bath
 Dad
 Clean out garage.
 Sort tools
 Tim
 Cut grass & hedge



P.S. My apologies to the five per cent of husbands and children who do their share around the house.

Relax and work less



Relax, and work less

A big event was coming to a local small town and, in preparation, the people resolved to clean the hardwood floor in the village hall. It was decided to scrub all the dirt, scruff marks, and old wax buildup from the floor and apply a coat of clear resinous finish (varnish). The committee in charge chose four of the best housewives and some husbands and the hall cleaner to do the job. It took the group of seven most of a Saturday to finish it. Six hours they laboured spending a total of forty-two hours to get the floor ready for the final application.

Four years later, after some hard use, the floor again needed the same attention. I had a free day, and since I consider cleaning floors an enjoyable pastime, I volunteered to do the job at no charge. I refused the help of other local volunteers and the cleaner and instead used my sons who were twelve and eight years old. We arrived at the building at

10.30 and went home early for lunch at 11.45. The job was completed perfectly in one and a quarter hours, or for the three of us three and three quarter total hours, much less than the forty-two hours used by the group. We used three fewer mops, half the cleaners and strippers, and a tenth of the hot water – and did a much better job.

Any of you could have done the same thing, using a valuable principle of cleaning: relax and work less. To relate this principle more directly to the domestic front, let's take a glimpse of Betty Betterhouse in action.

It has been an unbelievable morning. In addition to her own seven children, fourteen others, caught in a snowstorm, were overnight guests at her home. They consumed all of the eggs and bacon and other breakfast goodies. Then she made dozens of wholemeal pancakes. It was two hours before Betty finally saw her guests depart and the children off to

school. She then turned to the task of restoring her kitchen to a livable condition. The drops of batter, jam and grease covering her stove and worktop were now dry, hard and firmly stuck. Betty began scrubbing one end of the worktop furiously. Finally loosening (or wearing away) the spattered batter in one spot, she would move on another few inches to grind some more of the droplets away. Fifteen minutes later, after exhausting effort, the kitchen units were presentable.

Eliminate — saturate — absorb!

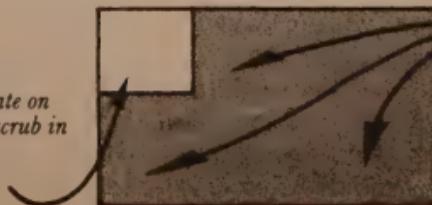
She could have saved thirteen minutes and at the same time preserved the worktop surface if she had used the cleaning principle that my sons and I used on the floor. You could call it the universal law of cleaning: *eliminate — saturate — absorb*. You can do seventy-five per cent of your cleaning with your head, not your hands — because seventy-five per cent of dirt removal is done chemically, not by elbow grease. Scrubbing to clean something went out with beating your clothes on a rock by the riverside. Betty needs only to shovel or sweep the crust and loose food particles from the worktop (*eliminate*: fifteen seconds). She should generously

soak her dishcloth in soapy water and wet the entire area (*saturate*: fifteen seconds), then give the liquid a few minutes to soak and loosen the spatters (*absorb*). Then she merely has to wipe the mushy residue off. Two minutes for the total job. Of course, many of us have been doing this for years, not only on our countertops, but on floors, walls, light fixtures, cars, sinks, baths, hardware, fireplaces, and four hundred other places that might have used Betty's old time-consuming system. Hard soap crust on the bathroom sink where the toilet soap sticks can take several minutes of scrubbing, but if it were sprayed or dampened first, it could be wiped off in two seconds. Almost everything will clean *itself* with water and the right chemical. Water is practically free and with a few pence worth of chemicals it can replace numerous hours of your time if used with the principle outlined above. It is so easy to apply the right solution and wait. Leave. Read. Rest. Apply more solution in another area, or do anything you like while the solution dissolves and the chemical action loosens and suspends the dirt. Unless you get your kicks out of scrubbing, there is not much reason to scrub and grind dirt off. By using the simple principle of *eliminate — saturate —*

The basic principle of cleaning

When cleaning a floor, wall, stovetop, bath or patio, apply the cleaning solution over as much of the area as possible.

- Don't concentrate on tiny areas and scrub in one place.



Spread the solution over a large area and let it soak in.

By the time you get here, the surface will have almost cleaned itself.

absorb in all cleaning, you can cut time and energy as much as we cut it on the floor job for the village hall.

On your house floors, for example, remove the obvious large objects (such as forks, Wellingtons, yoyos, dog bones, etc.), then spread the solution in as large an area as you can handle before it dries out. As you are finishing at one end of the room, the solution you first laid down is already working actively on the dirt, old wax, spots, stains, marks. When you return to the first area and begin to mop, wipe it clean, or lightly scrub, the remaining area is under heavy attack by the liquid, and most of the cleaning will have been accomplished by the time you get there with the mop.

When we cleaned the big floor in one and a quarter hours we spent almost no time scrubbing. Solution was spread in working areas and I ran over the surface with a machine (or with a Doodlebug). I didn't try to grind or scrub the floor clean. I covered it quickly to loosen the surface so the chemical solution could do the work. By the time I reached the far end of the room, the solution spread on the first part had dissolved and suspended the dirty old wax. The next trip over the same area caused every drop of dirt and wax to come off. The floor was immediately squeegeed and the gunk was picked up with a plain old dustpan and put in a bucket. This eliminated the need for a 'slop mop.' The floor squeegeed clean, then only needed to be mopped with clear water. One mop bucket did the whole floor!

In cases where all the dirt won't quite come off and scrubbing seems called for, it's generally your own fault - you've failed to perform good regular cleaning. Buildups of various kinds are the greatest



obstacle to simple cleaning. This is best exemplified by the old villain, hard water. Look at the brand-new sparkling tiles in your shower, or your exterior windows. They're going to get water on them from use, accident, rain, or irrigation. The residue is an innocent thing called a *drop*. A drop doesn't seem much of a bother, because if unmolested, it will evaporate away.

At least it will appear to leave. A closer examination reveals that each drop has a character called mineral salts which slide to the bottom of the drop as it evaporates. Though the drop appears to have vanished, a slight deposit of mineral salts remains at the bottom. Beginning so insignificantly and unseen, it is ignored. Again water is splashed on the surface and new drops form in the place occupied by previous drops, and leave their mineral marks to unite with the existing residue. Six months, sixty showers, or twenty lawn sprinklings later, that innocent first drop has become hard-water buildup. If kept clean daily, or in many cases, even weekly, it is a two-minute instead of a twenty-minute job. If done annually or 'when I get around to

it,' it is a surface-damaging, chemical-squandering experience, greatly embittering one's attitude towards cleanliness.

Matching dirt and cleaner

Make sure you match your cleaning agent base to the dirt or grime you are trying to remove. This is a simple but important principle. 'Base' simply means dissolving agent. Water won't cut oil because it's the wrong base. Vinegar won't cut grease even for Merlin the Magician. Most household cleaners won't cut oil at all. An inexpensive oil-based solvent or thinner will dissolve it in seconds. When oil or tar gets on walls, floors, carpets or even clothes, a solvent (like paint thinner, turpentine, or other petroleum based cleaner) will break down the tar or oil so that it can be easily wiped away. You can rub and grind a contact cement spill with every cleaner and mineral spirit available and not get anywhere. If you use a little lacquer thinner or contact cement solvent (again matching the contact cement base), it is instantly softened and can be wiped off as easily as soft butter out of a dish. Cleaning preparation labels will generally give the base. Whenever you are in doubt as to whether a particular solvent

should be used on a particular surface, test it first in an inconspicuous area.

Abrasion evasion

Using powdered cleansers and steel wool to grind dirt off surfaces has become a ritual with too many people. With the same generosity they use to apply powder to the baby's bottom, they coat their sinks with cleansing powder and attack them with brisk rubbing. You can actually hear the results as the grinding abrasion quickly removes stains and spots, along with the chrome or porcelain on the unit. The cleanser then has to be flushed off. Some of it will set like concrete in the gooseneck of the sink drain, on the floor, and on the fixtures. Next time, light scum which remains on the sink or tub has to be rubbed and polished off, again wearing away the surface. The damage is gradual but inevitable. Even more important, you lose time cleaning by the abrasion method. You should be relaxing to the cleaning principle *eliminate—saturate—absorb*. It really works. Discipline yourself to use it, and you'll reward yourself with two hours of free time out of the four hours you once wasted grinding and scrubbing away.



Don't be caught streaking...



windows

The dreaded task. At my housecleaning seminars I always spring the question, 'How many of you like to clean windows?' This is always good for a chorus of groans from everyone present. Occasionally, about two out of every thousand will raise an eager hand indicating that they, indeed, enjoy cleaning windows. (Further investigation reveals why: both have domestic helps to do the job!) That leaves almost one hundred per cent of homemakers who hate window cleaning.

The reason is quite simple. After hours of laboriously polishing windows, you think 'At last. I'm finished!' Hope is dashed when the sun comes up or changes angle. Streaks, sheens, and smears suddenly appear out of nowhere, magnified for all to see. In instant anger, you again give the window the full treat-

ment, and the smears, streaks, and sheens only change places. Rearming yourself with more window cleaner, rags, and gritty determination, you work even harder and faster to get the windows clean, but they seem only to get worse. Night falls, and so does the curtain, rescuing a crestfallen and discouraged worker. The next morning you go shopping and eye the fifty-storey, solid-glass-window buildings, the huge shop-front display windows, and mumble, 'That glass is beautiful... but I never see anyone cleaning it. How do they ever do it so fast and so well?'

The reason we seldom see window cleaners is not because those windows don't need to be done. Most commercial windows have to be cleaned more often than house windows. But professional

window cleaners only take minutes, not hours, to do their job. Amateurs can be just as effective on their own windows if they learn and practise some of the basic techniques used by the professionals.

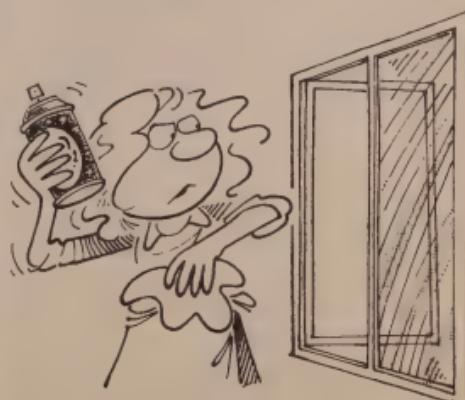
The first move towards successful window cleaning is to rid your storage cabinet of all the 'glass gleam' rubbish you have been trying to make work for years. The paramount reason your windows streak and seem to get worse is the oily, soapy gunk you've been spraying on them. Pounds of it have been sprayed on, and only part of it wipes off. Gradually you have built a base of transparent waxy material which you move and spread around every time you try to clean the windows. It not only creates an impossible cleaning situation, it also primes the glass surface to absorb and hold dust, insect spots, and airborne particles. The result is windows that have to be cleaned more often.

Take heart. It hasn't been your fault all these years. Even the chief window washer for London's tallest all-glass buildings couldn't get windows clean without streaks if all he used was the gunk sold to most of the public.

To recover all those lost polishing hours, let's learn to do windows professionally. Go down to the janitorial supply house and buy a professional brass or stainless steel squeegee with a twelve or fourteen inch blade. Steccone/Ettore is by far the best brand. Don't go to the local supermarket and be tempted by the smart shiny ones there. And don't be tempted either by those fancy ones with a sponge applicator. They will not work well, even in a professional's hands.

Use window-cleaning solution which can be ordinary dish-washing liquid or ammonia. They will work well if you use

them sparingly. There is always a tendency to add too much chemical or soap solution, which causes streaks and leaves residue. One lid or capful is plenty for each gallon of warm water.



Spraying and rubbing is self-defeating — as you can see as soon as the sun comes up or changes direction.

Four steps to sparkling windows

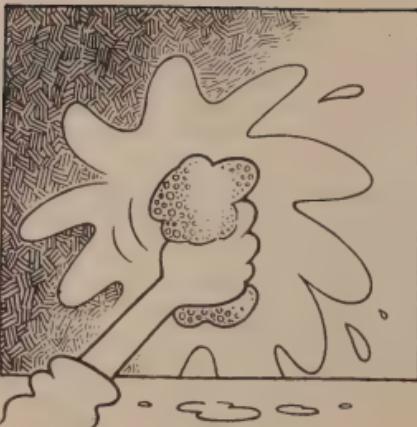
1. Using a clean sponge, soft-bristle brush, or a long-handled water applicator, lightly wet the window with the cleansing solution. You don't need to flood it away. You're cleaning it, not baptizing it. If the window is really dirty or has several years of miracle gunk built up, go over the moistened area again.

2. Quickly wipe the dry rubber blade of your newly purchased squeegee with a damp cloth or chamois. The reason for using a damp cloth is that a dry blade on any dry glass area will 'peep-a-peep' along and skip places. Dampening the blade lubricates it.

3. Next, tilt the squeegee at an angle, pressing one end of the squeegee lightly against the top of the window glass (not the window frame) and pull the squeegee across the window horizontally (see illustration). This will leave about a one-inch dry area across the top of the window. Remember all those drips that came running down from the top of your clean window when you tried squeegeeing once before? Well, by squeegeeing across the top, you've removed that potential stream.

4. Wipe the squeegee blade again with the damp cloth and place the rubber blade horizontally in the dry area and then pull down, lapping over enough into the dry, clean area to avoid any surplus water running in the cleaned area. Wipe the squeegee after each stroke.

A window can be cleaned from either side or from the top using this technique. Always be sure to angle off the top edge of the glass to eliminate potential dripping. Wipe off the bottom of the window sill with your damp cloth.



Step one.

Wet the window lightly with a brush or sponge.

It's worth the effort to work on this for a while, since it will be awkward at first. All of that accumulated gunk might take a little extra effort to remove. Once you catch on, you'll love it and wish you had more windows to do.

How to get rid of those last spots.

After completing a window, you undoubtedly will detect a tiny drop or squeegee mark or two and a little moisture on the eighth of an inch area where the side of the glass meets the frame. Your old tendency was to snatch a dry cloth and with a fingertip under it wipe off the edge. I can assure you this will leave a three-quarter inch mark right down that edge. Once you notice that, the temptation will be to wipe it again, this time with a crumpled cloth. Then you'll have a four-inch mark and have to clean the whole window again. After squeegeeing the window, just leave those tiny beads of side moisture. They will disappear and you'll never see them.

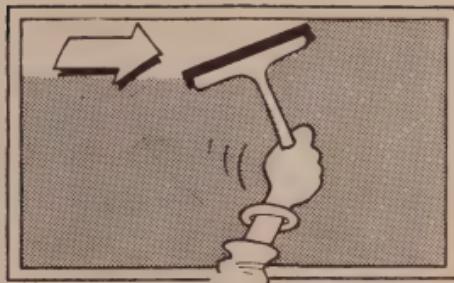
Your friends won't, either, unless they bring their opera glasses with them. As for middle-of-the-window drops or tiny squeegee lines, do not use a cloth (Law: There is no such thing as a lint-free or mark-free cloth in window cleaning). Because you've been working in the solution, your bare hand will be oil-free and by the time you get a window finished will be dry enough to dry wipe marks away without leaving a blemish.

This method is as easy as it sounds. It's three to five times faster than the old way. It will use only a penny or two worth of cleaner and leave your windows pure and clean to repel particles and dirt. Remember, atmospheric conditions affect glass more than any other material in the house: thus windows are a prime surface for film, oil, dirt, and even fingerprints. Try to keep your windows so clean and smooth that flies lose their footing. Shiny squeaky glass will repel marks much better than glass with a coat of wax or soap scum on it.

Problem areas

Squeegees will work on any normal household window (not on textured or stained glass, for instance), and they come in sizes to fit the task at hand. Squeegees can be cut to custom-fit your windows if you so desire. For small Victorian-style panes, a squeegee can be cut down with a hacksaw to fit. Pull the rubber out of the channel before cutting, and always cut the rubber a wee bit longer than the remodelled blade.

My advice regarding those tiny little square windows is to let them go as long as possible, because optical illusion from the concentrated small squares hides marks, specks and smudges. When they do need cleaning, depending on their



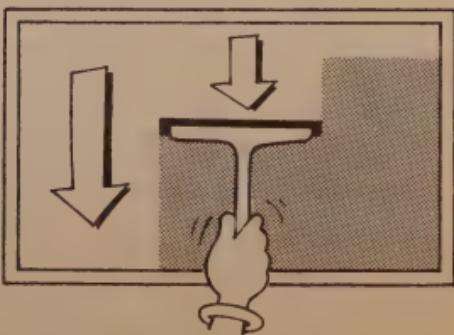
Step two.

Then angle-cut the top edge of the window with the squeegee. This will stop top drip.



Step three.

Place squeegee in dry area . . .



Step four.

. . . and pull down to clean. Wipe the squeegee with a damp cloth or chamois after each stroke.



Avoid the temptation to use a cloth to wipe the last few drops of water off a squeegeed window. Your bare, oil-free hand will do much better.

size, either a squeegee or evaporating window cleaner can be used. If you're not too particular, I'd just hose them down, brush off the worst, rinse them, and call it a day. I don't think any window in a home is worth hours and hours of work. Big windows show dirt and streaks more readily than small panes. Small panes look more romantic and can be a bit hazy.

There are times and places in small, confined areas where an evaporating-type solution is more efficient to use (fingerprints on glass entrance doors, mirrors, decorative doors and windows, etc.). The quick-drying solution won't leave a waxy buildup and allows you to polish the glass. Only slight sheens and streaks are left, which are seldom noticeable in such small areas. If you can't find concentrated liquid you could use a window-cleaning aerosol — but never on a big window.

When window frames and fittings get older, paint and putty chips may catch under the squeegee blade and make cleaning miserable. New aluminium or

well-maintained wood won't give you any trouble. If your squeegee blade gets damaged and leaves a line, turn it over. When it wears out or rounds out, just buy a new rubber and snap it into the squeegee channel. (Be sure an eighth of an inch of the rubber blade laps over at each end of the channel.)

When windows are out of reach for easy hand or ladder work, a pole or handle of any length you can manoeuvre will work on the same principle with surprising accuracy. I use a four- to eight-foot extending handle from a janitorial supplier. Clean glass always looks good. A few tiny smudges or drips won't hurt anything, so don't try to be a perfectionist. It isn't worth the stress or time.

Other window problems

Most window damage (apart from breaking them) occurs when labels are being removed from new windows or paint or plaster from new or old ones. There are three rules in performing clean-up operations on glass:

1. Always keep the glass surface wet. The foreign material you are trying to remove will then generally slide or float off instead of digging in.

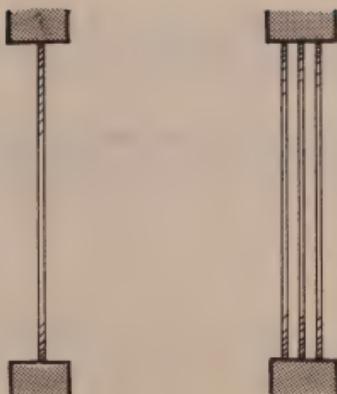


Dragging a scraper backwards can trap sand or dirt under the blade causing it to scratch the glass.

2. Use only razor-sharp blades or flat razor-type tools in a one-way forward motion, then lift the tool off the glass and make another forward stroke. Never go back and forth. Pulling the tool back and forth will eventually trap a piece of grit or sand behind and under the blade, which will scratch even a wet window (you'll never rub *that* one off with a de-oiled bare hand, either).

3. Don't use abrasive scrubbing pads or compounds on window glass.

Learning to clean windows quickly and effectively will change your outlook on life. You'll cherish the sweet little fingerprints, enjoy watching frustrated insects slip off the glass, and even tolerate the sweet birdies who occasionally be foul your windows.



Buy a good sealed, double-glazed unit . . .

. . . not a three-section storm window with six sides to clean.

Keeping the enemy out



Mats: a must

A new private modern hospital, nestled in a valley with one of the world's most famous ski resorts, had been in operation for two years when its housekeeping employees retired. Replacements were needed and a professional cleaning service was contracted. Following careful measurement of the space, occupancy, conditions, and with direction from the retiring staff members, it was concluded that a total of twelve hours of work was required each night to clean the whole: offices, public area, entrances, and medical administrative wing. When signing the contract, the owner of the cleaning company made one explicit demand. Both entrances to the hospital were to be covered with a nylon,

vinyl-backed mat, covering at least fifteen feet inside both entrances. There had been no mats before because aesthetically they were a possible distraction from the hospital's alpine beauty. The hospital's administrator agreed to order the doormats that day.

The cleaning company began their service and were spending twelve hours, plus a few extra each day to keep the place up to standard. They wet-mopped nightly, used six treated dustcloths on the floor, and had to scrub some areas every week with their machines. Anticipating the difference the new mats would make, the cleaning company owner asked the sweeping and vacuuming crew to keep and photograph the night's residue collected from the floor

throughout the building. Each night a gallon can was half-filled with gravel, sand, thread, pine needles, and every other possible thing common to a resort area. Three weeks later, the mats arrived and were installed at both entrances.

The first night the mats were in place, the hours of work dropped to ten and the sweeping residue was reduced to a pint of sweet papers, toothpicks, etc. After one week, the new mats reduced the cleaning to nine hours per night. The dustcloths were reduced from six to two, mopping was reduced to twice a week, and dusting to every other night. Cleaning supplies were cut more than fifty per cent. The mats cost £140 and they were paid for in less than one week in labour and cleaning supplies saved. No increase in entrance falls was noted, and the mats lasted for four years.

Proper matting alone could save the average household two hundred hours of work a year, slow down structure depreciation by seven per cent and save £80 in direct cleaning material costs. The cost of matting for the average home is approximately £100. But it's the two hundred hours that's the big saving for you. That's thirty minutes a day cut from your chore time with no effort expended.

The reason for such saving of time, effort, money, and depreciation is easy to understand if you simply ask yourself, 'What is it that I clean out of my house, off my rugs, off the walls, off the pictures, upholstery, etc? Dust and dirt are the obvious answers. Where do they come from? Almost one hundred per cent comes from the outside. How does it get inside? Eighty-five per cent of it is transported in (the rest leaks through cracks, is airborne, or originates inside). Most dirt or residue is carried into the home via the

clothes and the feet. Where is your carpet the dirtiest? At the entrance, on about a three by four foot square where the matting should be. It's only logical – if dirt doesn't get in, you won't have to clean it up. As a person criticising mats once said, 'Bah! I hate doormats – all they are is dirt catchers.' I rest my case.

Taking advantage of good matting is the quickest, most intelligent and least expensive thing you can do to cut down on your housecleaning time. It is easier to vacuum or shake out a mat daily than it is to chase dirt all over the house. Look at the hospital. The distributed dirt and debris were reduced from half a gallon to one pint. Mats will perform a great service in your home. Convinced? Don't take my word for it – try it. You'll cry over the lost years of labour and money you've wasted by not getting adequate mats sooner. Instead of scrubbing your floor weekly, you could end up doing it annually. (I've even had one commercial building go *five years* and the floor finish still looked good.) If you have good matting, all the fine gravel, grit, and dirt that hangs on the bottom of the shoe and scratches, soils, and discolours will be out of action. Waxed floors last a long time when they aren't abused by grit.

Next time you go into an office building notice the difference in the floor on the ground floor as compared to the upper floors, even though the traffic might be the same. The upper ones will last twice as long and look twice as good because the grit doesn't get to them. Traffic doesn't hurt a floor much – it's the abrasiveness of dirt that creates havoc. Keep it out of your home, and you'll keep yourself out of the crouching, scrubbing position.

Here are some points about matting

that will help towards your goal of gaining thirty free minutes a day:

Some mats to sidestep. Avoid decorative mats. We all love to see our name in print – even on a tiny, worthless rubber door-mat. Get rid of it. It isn't doing much good, and the time it takes to clean around it is probably greater than the cleaning time it saves. Link mats (the kind made from little slices of old car tyres laid on their sides and spliced with wire) are ineffective for most homes and extremely dangerous for wearers of high heels. Coco mats are more trouble than they're worth because they don't absorb well. Have you ever tried to clean a coco mat? That alone should convince you not to buy one.

Outside the house any rough, non-perforated rubber or rubber-backed mat is good. These won't rot, they're easy to clean, and they'll knock the big stuff off the shoes or boots of the person coming into your home. Try to get a four by five foot or longer mat to cover three or four footsteps. The exact type of exterior mat to buy depends on the space available, overhead cover (awning or porch), if any, your home and landscaping style, and how bad theft is in your neighbourhood.

On the inside. The first thing to do is get rid of any carpet samples or scraps you are using for rugs. The jute backing and curling edges send their users into hospital. They're unsafe, unattractive, and, more important, inefficient. Get rid of them.

From carpet and flooring shops and janitorial suppliers you can order commercial vinyl/rubber-backed nylon mats such as Jaymart's 'Tuf-n-Tidy II' or



Avoid using cheap carpet squares.



Don't use mats with a cloth backing.



Get rid of link or perforated mats.

'Caretaker' (see Equipment Chart). These mats are efficient, will last for years, and are available in a variety of colours. They come in widths of three, four, or six feet, and in any length. The nylon creates a static charge that actually helps pull particles from your shoes and clothes. They will absorb mud and water from foot traffic and hold it in the roots of the mat. They won't show dirt easily and can be vacuumed like any other carpet. When they need washing down, take them out to the pavement; spray with a hose; sprinkle a little cleaning solution on them and brush it around. Then rinse them and hang them out to dry.

An often forgotten area in our homes which should also be well matted is the garage entrance. Husbands and children transport plenty of sawdust, oil stains, and project residue into the house from the garage. Fine silt, sand, and gravel piled up on the road often get caught up in the snow which sticks under a car and falls on to the garage floor. When it melts, the sand and grit are carried into the house by foot. Concrete dust and garage-type mess and dirt are abrasive to carpet or waxed floors.

Flats, bedsits and caravans are not excluded from the need for mats. The

slightly smaller amount of dirt/debris that might get to the eighth floor of a modern block of flats is multiplied by the fact that it has a smaller area over which to distribute itself, hence the soiling and damage to the dwelling can be as acute as in a large, dust-surrounded farmhouse.

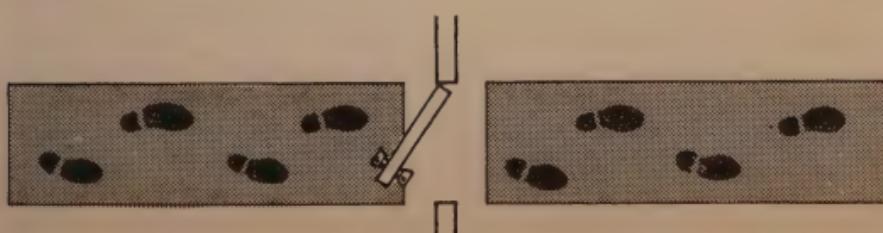
A three by five-foot mat is an excellent all purpose size. It's wide enough to cover an average doorway, long enough to cover four entrance steps, and light enough to handle and to clean. An extra three by twelve foot runner may be rolled up and kept for decorating, parties or wet weather. This extra mat would be a good investment if your traffic, lifestyle, and neighbourhood merit it. It would be especially good for a new home. It's common for a family to move in before the surroundings are completed. Work in the muddy garden lasts for several months. The resulting damage is often unnoticed because the house is new.

Along with the thirty minutes a day you will save when you install adequate matting, you gain aesthetic value, safety benefits, sound absorption, and even an inviting place for Rover and Tabby to bed down. Get mats before you start to clean, and you won't have to start as soon or work as long.

EXTERIOR

DOOR

INTERIOR



Try to allow four steps on each mat.

Get on top of your floors

The floor, more than any other part of the house, projects the overall image of your home. The chances of anyone noticing that all-day sucker stuck to the patio door, the half-eaten sausage on the bookcase, or the cobweb across Grandpa's picture, are lessened if the floors are clean and brilliant. And maintaining beautiful floors is one of the simplest jobs in the house.

The term 'hard floors' did not originate as a description of the effort needed to clean them; it's simply used to distinguish them from soft floors and carpets. Hard floors include tile, linoleum, wood, ceramic tile, terrazzo, cork, dirt (nothing under it), and good old concrete. All hard floors have their purpose and place, and they all have to be cleaned and maintained.

Good floor care can be a lifesaver for you physically and emotionally. There are four reasons for you to learn and apply proper floor care practices:

1. **Appearance.** A beautiful floor is a cheering experience for everyone who sees it and a reward for the homemaker.
2. **Protection.** Even the hardest surfaces will scuff, wear, and dull with grinding foot traffic, spills and chemical cleaners.

A wax or other protective finish covering the surface lessens the abrasions and other damage and lengthens the life of a floor. Even the new 'never need to wax' floors do need a dressing or finish to prevent an eventually dull surface.

3. **Cleanability.** Soil, dirt, spills, marks of all kinds, and abrasive residues are much simpler to clean from a well-waxed or finished surface. Sweeping a well-used unwaxed or unfinished tile floor will take you twenty-five per cent longer than sweeping a highly polished, smooth-surfaced one. A coat of wax on the floor is like a coat of varnish on a bare wood picnic table. It keeps the dirt and grease from penetrating the surface. Wiping something from the top of a nonpenetrable finish takes only seconds. It sure beats spending hours trying to scrub it out when it has soaked in and stained.

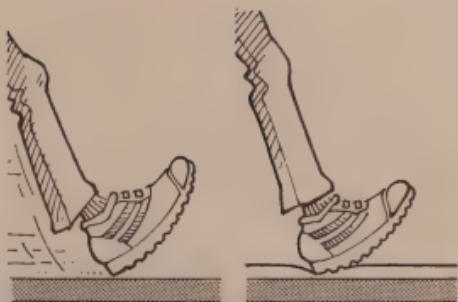
4. **Safety.** Contrary to what most people think, shiny, well-waxed and properly maintained floors are generally much less slippery than bare floors. Bare, worn floors have a flint-hard surface when wet, dry or smooth. A coat or two of wax or finish actually cushions the floor. It could be compared to laying a thin cloth or cover over the top of a bare plastic

table top: the cover creates a cushion or surface that won't let things slide around. Thus a 'cover' of wax makes most floors less slippery.

Just another reminder: floors require less cleaning if you provide adequate entrance matting (see Chapter 8). Hundreds of hours of floor problems and worries will disappear if you install adequate matting at entrances to stop dirt and abrasives from getting into your house. Some discolouration and wear of waxes comes from exposure to sunlight and ageing. But the majority of deterioration of floors and discolouration of wax or finish comes from penetration of dirt into the wax and the floor surface.

How to clean hard floors

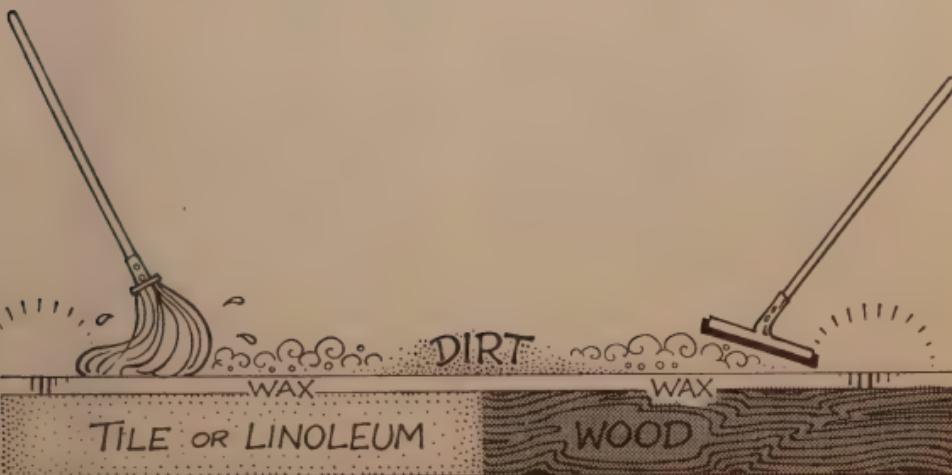
The tools and equipment needed to clean your floors depend on the amount and type of hard-surface floors you have. During the last twenty years, carpet has found its way into more and more new



Clean, waxed floors are safer than bare, untreated floors because wax creates a cushion.

houses, often leaving only kitchen and bathroom with hard floors. If a hard floor is in the centre of the house where considerable travel over carpeted areas is required to reach it, that hard-floor finish will last for months (if kept clean), and you could do it by hand in about fifteen minutes a year.

If you have several rooms of tile, vinyl, linoleum, quarry tile, and wood-surfaced floors as well as a big games room, gar-



The basic principle of good floor care is to provide flooring with a surface from which dirt can easily be removed.



To move furniture easily without scratching the floor, place a thick towel under the feet. This makes cleaning access much easier.

age, converted patio, or storage area, some basic labour-saving floor tools would be a good investment. The chart on pages 21 to 24 outlines what I would suggest. Buy a good sixteen-ounce wet mop, with long strands which are cut straight across the end. Don't buy one with an Afro hairstyle! Then buy a good mop bucket with a pair of roller-wringers across the top. The simpler mop buckets with a perforated compartment on one side are just not as good. Wringing mops by hand is finger suicide. The pins, glass, etc., your mop picks up will lacerate your hands. The price of a small commercial mop bucket might shock you, but gasp once or twice and buy it anyway. It will be a time-saver and greatly contribute to the quality of work you can do.

Keep it clean

Again, the most important factor in saving time and keeping maintenance of your floor to a minimum is simple: keep it clean. That doesn't just mean removing roller skates, doggie bones, coins, combs, and clothes, either. It is the dust, grit, gravel, sand, food crumbs, and other

such substances which remain on floors and eventually get ground into powder and embed themselves in your floor that cause your cleaning woes. Once all this dirt power is on the loose, it will destroy a floor rapidly. Keep hard floors well swept (even when you can't see dirt and dust). Where possible, use a commercial eighteen-inch treated dustmop (see page 21). It is faster, more effective, and will last much longer than anything you can pick up at the department store.

Thoroughly shake out your mop after every use, preferably not over your neighbour's fence.

Wax it

As I said earlier, most hard floors need a protective coating. Floors will wear out much faster if they are not protected. Floors advertised as needing no wax will also dull in well-used areas if not protected by a finish of some kind. The 'never need to wax' claim is false if you expect such a floor to stay shiny in heavy traffic areas.

First, take the old wax off

Once the hard floor is prepared by sweeping and you know the old wax or finish is due to come off, it's time to make that hard job an easy one. Arrive at the scene with a mop bucket three-quarters full of clean water. Don't put cleaner in the mop bucket. Depending on the size of the room, mix – in an ordinary bucket – some warm water and floor cleaner, (ammonia or detergent cleaner will be good enough, or, if you want all the wax off, use a heavier ammonia solution or a wax remover, such as Johnsons New Prompt). Dip your fresh mop into the solution in the ordinary bucket (not the

mop bucket) and apply to the floor generously so that the solution can attack the old wax or dirt. Cover as large an area as you feel you can clean and take up before it dries. You'll learn how much to do if it dries on you once. Remember, you are using the basic principle of cleaning explained in Chapter 6. As soon as the solution is on the floor, old wax and dirt begin to be dissolved and suspended, and can soon be wiped off easily.

This is a bit optimistic, because chances are you have some spots where wax has built up thick as cardboard and hard as a bullet. It will need scrubbing and possibly another coat or two of solution. If so, scrub. If you don't have a floor machine, you can scrub away until the surface is free of everything you wish to remove. If you haven't got a machine, get a Doodlebug (3M makes the best). A Doodlebug has a handle (like a mop) with a plastic gripper on its end which holds a flat 5 by 10-inch abrasive nylon floor pad. This is commonly found at janitorial supply houses. By applying a little weight to the handle, you can scrub the floor effectively. Edges, especially, are easy with a Doodlebug. I think one is superior to five of those small electric twin-brush scrubbers. If you use a floor machine, use nylon scrubbing pads under it. Brushes are almost worthless.

When the solution on the floor looks gunky and creamy, it means that dirt and old wax are coming loose. Check the scrubbed floor with your fingernail. If, after a scrape across the floor, your nail looks like you son's, then wax is still there. Scrub more and use more solution. As you are scrubbing and are on the verge of passing out from ammonia fumes and exhaustion, you are in a good frame of mind to resolve not to let your

floor ever get in this condition again and to save yourself hundreds of future scrubbing hours. Most floor-cleaning time is spent trying to get wax off unused areas, such as under the lamp table, the TV, and off the edges of the floors. Previously, when you waxed the traffic paths or worn areas which needed it, you also gave the edges and all the other places which didn't need it a generous coat. This system of application is repeated year after year. A well-used area will come clean easily because there is no buildup, but the thick areas will need lots of work to get the buildup off. Next time, don't wax the floors where you don't use them. Once you've given the entire area one coat of wax and more coats are to be applied, put the wax *on heavy-traffic areas only*.

Now, back to cleaning the floors. The floor is soaked and scrubbed, the wax and dirt are loosened, and it is a mess. Don't pull out that mop and try to sop or slop it up. Instead, reach for a simple, inexpensive tool called a floor squeegee. Get an eighteen-inch Ettore, not the heavy garage type, or use an old squeegee you have lying around (not your nice new window squeegee, which should be used only for windows). Squeeze the gunk into a puddle on the uncleaned area, and use an ordinary dustpan and empty bucket to quickly scoop the gunk up. The squeegeed floor area (except for a possible drop or two from the squeegee lap) will be almost perfectly clean. A squeegee will give you one of the best possible jobs on floor coverings that have those little indentations — design impressions of various kinds. (Such floors are the 'pits' to clean, for the most part. If you have a wet-dry vac, use it instead.) Now for the mop. Rinse it in clear water

and then damp-mop the area. Don't damp-mop where gunk puddles were. Let the floor dry, and that area is ready to wax. Repeat this process until the whole floor is finished. All the gunk will end up in one bucket to be dumped in the toilet (*not the sink*). The mop water will remain fresh and will work for the entire floor because it only rinses the squeegeed floor.

When the floor is dry, apply a first light coat of wax on the entire floor. On the next coat and remaining ones, keep wax out of areas that are not heavily used. I would use a good commercial polymer finish wax, obtainable at any janitorial supply house.

Remember daily maintenance for protection

After you've expended all the time and effort to get the floors clean and shiny, keep them clean daily and they will last for years. Remember, it's the spills, crumbs, sand, dust, etc., that create the conditions that make you work. If a few black marks get on the floor, they will be on top of the wax, and easily removed with the moist nylon cleaning pad on the end of your Doodlebug. Again, I will stress that the most efficient way to keep hard floors clean is on a daily basis with a good dustmop. Brooms stir up dust all over the place and leave fine unseen particles that will be ground into your new wax, eventually destroying the floor. A good dustmop is much faster and does a much better job than straw brooms. There is no comparison, especially if you have a good-quality mop. Department store dry mops are a joke; they do more spreading than cleaning. Secure a good eighteen-inch commercial dustmop with

a full-circle, rotating swivel head. These are only obtainable from janitorial supply houses. This unit will cover a lot of ground quickly and is flat enough to get under furniture. It will gather gravel, paper clips, sweets papers, safety pins, and the hundred other items that find their way to the floor, and will pick up and hold the dust. A dustmop is unbelievable on sealed concrete basement and garage floors. You'll have to buy a little dustmop (oil) treatment and spray the mophead when it is dry. Always spray twelve hours or more before use (even if you only have to spray it once a year) so that the oil has time to penetrate into all the fibres. If you have only a small amount of hard flooring, do it by hand with a cleaning cloth or dust cloth. You won't need one of these professional dustmops.

Damp-mopping. Damp-mopping floors on a daily basis is fast and easy. Just fill the mop bucket half full of warm water and put in a little neutral cleaner. (I'd use a disinfectant cleaner.) If you get the cleaning solution too strong, it might 'cut' or cloud the wax or finish. Dip the mop or a sponge mop, wring it slightly in your self-contained roller bucket, leave the mophead damp, and mop in a figure eight pattern. Remember, the bathroom floor is small; it's not worth carrying a big mop and bucket into such close quarters. Do it in one minute with your spray bottle of disinfectant and cloth.

Coping with concrete floors

Dustmopping concrete floors (mentioned above) is a trick most of us haven't heard of or used. Concrete floors, believe it or not, are almost equal in square footage to carpet in many homes. Unfinished

cellars are common. They wait many years – ‘until we can afford to finish those two bedrooms and a kitchen extension.’ Garages are also a mass of concrete flooring. Both of these areas bear a constant flow of traffic back and forth into the finished part of the house. Concrete produces much destructive material (dirt, grit, etc.) and is responsible for more cleaning time than you might realise. The surface of concrete (which is made of sand, cement, lime, and additive) will perpetually bleed dust and grit, which if not cleaned up regularly, eventually circulates through your house.

Go and fetch your broom right now and sweep your cellar or garage. Leave the pile of residue, and go back and sweep again just as carefully. The second pile will amaze you, as will the third if you sweep it again. Because concrete is textured and porous and bleeds, vacuuming it is really the only way to get it dustless, and after use, it will again be dusty. If you want to eliminate hundreds of hours of direct and indirect adverse results from concrete floors in your home, seal the concrete. You’ve walked on many a sealed floor in supermarkets, schools, stadiums, on ramps, etc. It looks like it is varnished. Sealed concrete is easy and practical to maintain and will last for years.

You can seal your own concrete floors. Concrete has to cure twenty-eight days or longer after pouring before it is ready to seal. It’s best to seal it before it’s used, because oil stains and other fluids may penetrate and are not removable, and the seal will magnify any marks. On old or new concrete, sweep up all surface dirt and remove everything possible from the floor (furniture, tools, etc.). Mop on a special strong solution

for preparing concrete before sealing. (Your janitorial supply house or a good paint shop will have these.) Let it soak in a while. It will break and release the surface lime and debris on the concrete, leaving a good firm clean base. If the floor is old and marked, scrub it with a floor machine (or your trusty Doodlebug). Even if you can’t scrub, apply the solution and let it set. Then flush the solution off, using your floor squeegee. Rinse with a hose. Allow the floor to dry for five or more hours. Transparent concrete seal, all-purpose seal and special paints can be obtained at good paint stores or janitorial supply houses. Apply it, according to directions, with any applicator that will distribute it in a thin even coat, and let it dry. Most concrete seals are self-leveling so it will not be difficult to apply. I’d advise a second coat to make sure all the etched, rough surfaces are filled. (Don’t try to save the used applicator. Lamb’s wool isn’t worth cleaning out.)

Once the seal is dry, you have a shiny, glossy, smooth (not slippery) surface which can be waxed or treated like any hard floor. Stains, oil slicks, etc., can be wiped off without leaving the usual ugly penetrating marks. Sealed concrete finish wears well. Chips and scrapes can be touched up with a small paintbrush or cloth and they will blend in. You can maintain sealed concrete floors just like other hard floors.

Wooden floors

Keep a good resinous finish or wax on your wood floor or follow dealer’s recommendations. Moisture won’t bother wood if a finish repels it. Once water or moisture gets into wood, it swells the grain and pops off the outer

finish. Then the wood deteriorates rapidly. Most wood floors can be treated like any hard-surface floor if the surface finish is adequate.

Avoid sanding wood floors. An eighth of an inch of wood taken off a three-quarters of an inch floor really affects its performance. Cracks will appear and squeaks will develop.

If your wood floors are old and ugly-looking, chances are the problem's not the wood, but the layers of yellowed, cracked finish. If you sand it down, the old finish will gum up the belts of the sander, and it will be a mess. Instead, try this easy way that works almost every time: buy a gallon or two of varnish remover or paint remover, and apply generously to the floor. The old varnish will instantly crumble and release its hold on the wood. Use your trusty floor squeegee to mop up the mess and get rid of it. This should leave the floor bare. Without leaving water on the floor for too long, clean it as previously instructed. This cleaning will get rid of any stripper residue left. If residue is not completely removed, future varnish applications will be adversely affected. Let the floor dry for ten hours or until

any swelling is gone. Touch up with a sanding disc or a little hand-sanding if there is a nick or two. Ignore small cracks and marks. The seal you apply will blend things in. Apply one coat of penetrating 'seal' and one coat of finish. You won't believe how good it will look or how easy the job will be. Dealers of all these products have the directions on how to use them.

A few final words about floors

Remember, good matting at exterior and interior entrances will save you more floor work than all the gimmicks, tips, and miracle floor formulas combined. Avoid one-application, miracle combinations that clean and wax your floor at the same time. If anyone in the family has shoes or other footwear that leave black marks, I would make a quick Salvation Army donation of them (the shoes, not the person!).

Some floors are much easier to maintain than others, so don't break your neck trying to match your neighbours'. Some floor material, because it is cheap, damaged, porous, or has bad colour, will never look good despite all your efforts.

Some floors need three or four coats of wax to build them up to a gloss. A good shine will hide a multitude of sins. If the floor won't shine, or it is difficult to maintain, consider replacing it or carpeting it if the lack of shine bothers you.

Pick a good-quality flooring. Remember that solid colours are harder to maintain and to keep looking good. Try to avoid the floors with grooves and indentations — they are literally the 'pits'. Smooth-surface floors are nicer — and much easier to keep clean.



Keep wooden floors covered with protective varnish or other resinous floor finish. If moisture penetrates wood it swells, cracks, blisters and wears.

How to clean carpets - for a softer life



'Never shampoo a carpet before you have to, because once you do, it will get dirty faster' (Old Wives' Tales, cont'd). That's like saying, 'Never wash your socks or underwear after the first wear-ing, because they will get dirty faster.' There are plenty of soothsayers around quoting great carpet verse and wisdom to the homemaker, most of which cost you time and money. With some simple professional techniques, you can get the job done, keep your carpets bright, and minimise your maintenance time. My company cleans and maintains several million square feet of carpet every night. The results have produced some personal opinions, and I think what I have learned applies to household as well as office carpet.

Buy quality carpet

Most of the carpet on the market is pretty good, but remember, it costs only

a few pounds more to go first class. Pay two or three pounds extra per yard to get the better grade, and have it installed professionally. It *will* make a few pounds difference in an average living room but it will produce thousands of pounds of benefit in comfort, durability, enjoyment, and ease of maintenance. Personally, for homes, I love ankle-deep pile.

Selecting carpet colour, style, and material is generally a personal privilege, but living with it (especially maintaining it) may not be a 'privilege' if you don't choose wisely. For example, commercial carpets are so tightly woven and low-profile they are now referred to as soft floors, not carpeted floors. Don't get too commercial-minded and buy the 'wear like iron' commercial-style carpet. Believe me, it *feels* like iron when you roll around on it playing with the kids or tackle a 'living room floor' project. The feel and the looks are a large part of the value of home carpeting. Much low-pile

or indoor-outdoor carpet is difficult to maintain, not because it gets any dirtier than a thicker, plusher carpet, but because of its short pile and the solid colours it usually comes in. Even tiny pieces of litter or fluff are highly visible on it, whereas a good thick pile or shag can tolerate, undetected, just about anything from crumbs to pencil shavings. There's nothing wrong with letting your rug help you out a little!

Some people will spend hours selecting an exact colour, not realising that the colour won't stay constant for a tenth of the time the carpet is in service because of use, lighting, and depreciation. Colour is one area where you should be cautious.

There is no way you can keep airborne industrial pollution, street oils, home heating gases, family cooking, etc., from any carpet. All carpets will get soiled with time. Light golds, white, and light pastel flecks are wonderful and will serve you well if you live 'el plusho' and your house is only a showplace. However, if you have children, grandchildren, animals or home-study groups, those elegant light carpets will be a disaster. Light colours show the dirt and are difficult to shampoo, often leaving 'sheep tracks' where people walk.

Regular maintenance is important

Carpet in a home or light commercial area is easier to take care of than a hardwood floor if it is maintained properly. Its biggest problem is neglect. A carpet that looks okay is often used and abused, going unnoticed until it's too late. Then the owner of the neglected carpet says, 'Huh, I wonder why the fur is all falling out?' or 'I can't remember what colour it

used to be. It must be time to clean it.' At this stage most people wake up to the fact that carpets have to be maintained. But by then it is too late. Clean-up attempts are generally futile, and the owner becomes displeased with the carpet, unjustly blaming his problems on the salesperson or manufacturer. You might think that the carpet wear and damage result only from foot traffic. Wrong.

Excessive carpet damage or wear results from a combination of foot traffic, furniture pressure, and residues (such as sand and grit) that remain in the carpet. Any sharp, abrasive particles or articles on or at the base of the carpet fibres are, as the carpet is walked on, ground against each other and in time, the fibres that aren't cut or damaged are soiled. The carpet wears out and gets soiled from the bottom as well as the top. Thus to maintain your carpet properly, you've got to keep off or remove surface litter, dust, grit, wet soil, and the old airborne dirt before they are embedded in your carpet.

Another reminder: good matting will cut out a big share of this, especially mud and grit. Airborne dust you will have to live with. Litter you can pick up and then vacuum. The real culprit is embedded dirt. Vacuum cleaners were invented to get embedded dirt, surface dust, and litter from carpets efficiently. Few vacuums make as much impression on the carpet as they do on the user who thinks noise, chrome, and suction are the ultimate. For ages, vacuum salesmen (all equal in wind velocity to their products) have unloaded shiny, overpriced machines on customers who were fascinated by suction and attachments. Neither of these is that important in maintaining your carpet and saving yourself housecleaning hours. After

showing you how a vacuum can do everything but brush your teeth, the sales approach is to lay a steel ball on the floor and suck it up into the vacuum. The gullible potential customer thinks, 'If that vacuum can get a big steel ball off the carpet, sand and gravel will be a snip.'

Wrong! First, the steel ball trick is an air-flow-volume-size manoeuvre that any vacuum, weak or strong, old or new, can do under the right conditions. Just get a steel ball the right size for the hose or intake volume, and the displacement principle of vacuuming air will slurp up the ball. Now take a piece of thread and mash it into the carpet so it has a little static bind. A vacuum cleaner strong enough to pick up a piano bench will often have trouble picking up the thread because there is no displacement lift. We've all tried to get up a thread, haven't we? Suction alone will not remove the embedded particles of dirt, grit, and sand. It will remove only the surface dirt because, like the thread, the displacement lift is not there and the carpet fibres are standing in the way to effectively hold the embedded dirt and grit, and all

those other villains grinding away at your carpet. The use of a good 'beater' vacuum is required.

Beat it! Its distinguishing feature is a rapidly rotating brush which beats, combs, and vibrates the carpet. This loosens and dislodges embedded dirt and dust so the suction can pull it up into the vacuum. Most beater brush heads are adjustable and will not wear out carpets under normal use.

Don't abuse your vacuum

Eighty per cent of vacuuming problems are caused not by a loose nut on the machine, but by the loose nut running it. The personality and habits of the user can take a great toll on vacuums. For example, I gave two heavy-duty commercial vacuum cleaners for Christmas one year, one to my mother-in-law and one to another relative. My mother-in-law's vacuum still works like new and she has used it daily for the past thirteen years. The other one lasted less than thirteen months.

The unintentional (or sometimes intentional) vacuuming of nails, scout



Rugs and carpets must have good daily care with a beater-type vacuum to keep dirt out of the roots.



badges, apple cores, safety pins, and marbles is what hurts vacuums. That sickening knock, knock, knock you hear when the vacuum picks up one of these or similar articles generally means the blades of your turbulator fan are being sheared off. If you are vacuuming more and enjoying it less (getting up less dirt), you had probably better replace the fan. It's not uncommon to have a fine-running vacuum without suction, and a worn-out fan is generally the reason.

Note: a magnet mounted on the front of your upright machine will pick up tacks, pins, needles, nails, safety pins, or any other metal object you might miss before vacuuming. It will save injuries to crawling babies, wrestling boys, and nice, new vacuum cleaners.

Are you the one in seven?

Studies show that one out of every seven women needs a new vacuum cleaner. If you are that one, get it before your husband spends the money on a new chain saw which he'll use once or twice during the rest of his life.

There are exceptions that might require an exceptional vacuum cleaner,

but in ninety-nine per cent of the cases the market has just what you need. The ideal? I would buy two vacuums: first an upright beater-bar type. Go a step further and get a commercial upright. They are almost like the standard models sold in the high street except they generally have a longer, heavier cord, a heavy-duty beater bar, a more durable turn-on switch and a better quality bag. Cloth bags are generally better: paper filter replacement bags are costly to buy and a nuisance to store. If you use door-mats efficiently, you'll cut down vacuuming intake considerably, and a cloth bag will last a long time. Cloth bags need to be emptied and shaken well to keep them from becoming impregnated with dust. If you lack a suitable alley, garden, or garage to do the airing, disposable bags might serve you better. When bags get too clogged, you'll smell 'resident dust' when you click the vacuum on. Don't be alarmed until you can see it pouring out when you start the vacuuming. Then you'd better do some vigorous shaking, inside and out. An interesting exception, where disposable bags are an advantage, is in a tropical climate, where there are bugs, lizards, ants, and other creatures great and small, capable of hiding in deep shag. Their condition after passing through the beater bar and fan blades is such that a cloth bag would soon be befouled.

There are some pretty good upright vacuums on the market. Hoover do a heavy professional model and other manufacturers like Nilco do good ones too. They all work perfectly well if maintained properly. People either love or hate their vacuums beyond all reason, so I never try to switch anyone to my favourite makes. You should be able to

buy a first-class commercial upright for under a hundred and fifty pounds.

Resist buying a boxful of attachments that do everything from sterilizing to painting. Most of them are trinket productions, and gradually the gadget accessories break or get lost and eventually the machine is only used for what you needed it for in the first place – to vacuum.

My criticism of attachments is well documented by your own experience. That big display box of shiny gadgets to hook up to your vacuum is a smashing selling point, but it is shushed, unused, from cupboard to cupboard for years until the box disintegrates or wears out. Then the tools themselves are banged around but never used. Finally, after twelve years, you need the goose-necked anteater attachment to vacuum the cubby hole of the car. Then you can't find it! Don't buy them. Get a sturdy, simple upright. (Do be sure to get a vacuum with a long cord – who among us has not wished a hundred times that the vacuum cord was 'just ten feet longer'? Extension cords are a pain and cut your efficiency greatly. [Every time you need to use it you have to hunt it down from the family member who borrowed it for some other purpose.]

Then invest in a tank-type wet-dry vacuum. You'll be money and time ahead.

The wet-dry vacuum

In addition to your upright, get a tank-type wet-dry vacuum. A wet-dry is a vacuum that will pull in both dry material and water. Generally this is accomplished by a simple filter adjustment. Wet-drys are great. They are the vacuums to buy the attachments for, and the

first one should be an extra-long hose.

A five-gallon or smaller wet-dry is fine for household use. They range in price from £26 to £200. For around £110, you should be able to obtain a beautiful commercial unit which will last for years, if your neighbours or relatives don't find out. When they do, your efficient little wet-dry will be cleaning carpet spills, spots, car upholstery, floors, furniture, curtains, rafters (another reason for a long hose), carpet edges, caravans, boats . . . the list could go on, take my word for it.

These two vacuums are approximately a £250 investment and will cover all your vacuum needs plus a few dozen you never thought about before.

A vacuuming in time . . .

A good carpet-cleaning programme will free you from hours of work and emotional anguish. Clean carpets look and feel better, and they last longer. A regularly maintained carpet means less frequent shampooing, less of your time expended, and more compliments from your guests.

The ideal carpet care plan is to (1) keep all possible dust, dirt, and abrasive material from getting on the carpet – the job of good matting; (2) regularly extract all possible litter and harmful embedded debris from the carpet – the job of a good vacuum; (3) keep the surface grime off the top of the carpet so that it can't penetrate – the job of effective surface cleaning.

Vacuum carpets and mats regularly. Don't wait until you can see the dirt. Because it may be possible to camouflage crumbs, dog biscuits, pins, coins and orange peel in a big luxurious shag doesn't mean you should overdo it. All

HOW TO REMOVE CARPET STAINS

1



Catch the spot or stain when it's fresh. Chances of removal are seventy-five per cent better.

2



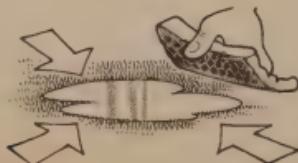
Carefully blot or scrape the entire stained area before applying any solution. Avoid using liquids that might spread the stain.

3



Before using any chemicals, test carpet in a small, inconspicuous area to make sure damage or discolouration won't occur.

4



Do not rub the spill because it might spread the problem — work spot cleaner from the outside of the stain towards the inside to avoid spreading the stain.

5



After treatment, blot all moisture up. Dry with towelling and brush the nap to a standing position after the stain has gone. Be sure you blot with a clean white (not coloured) cloth.

6



After final blotting, if you feel there is still too much moisture before you brush up the nap, place a stack of white cloth towels about three-quarters of an inch thick over the spot and weight them with a heavy object.

materials detrimental to carpeting should be kept out of the carpet. I've seen homes go from eight to ten years before the carpets needed shampooing, all because of good matting and regular maintenance. Saving on shampooing is wise because shampooing is expensive, whether you do it yourself or have it done professionally.

Staircases are a pain, and I've found the easy way to keep stairs and corners vacuumed is a tank-type vacuum with a long hose and a small mounted upholstery tool attachment on the end of a 'wand.' True, there is no beater, but in this case the stronger suction from the small attachment and vigorous hand action do just as well. (Using your upright vacuum on the stairs once in a while will prevent dirt from becoming embedded.)

Always keep your vacuum on carpeted area while it is running. I've ruined a beautiful wood floor by running a low-slung vacuum over it. The metal part of the beater bar thumped the floor on every rotation and dented it (at great expense to me, since our insurance covers liability but not stupidity).

Take care of your vacuum regularly. It's one of your most important household tools. The biggest secret of efficient vacuuming is *keeping your vacuum well maintained.*

Spots and stains

For spot and stain removal, I've gathered the opinions of many experts, housewives, and carpet manufacturers to construct the home approach in this book. (A guide dealing with *specific stains* is located at the end of this chapter.)

Protect your carpet

It is generally wise to treat carpet with a protector or soil retardant. A soil retardant is a chemical treatment which helps carpets resist dirt and helps prevent water- and oil-based spots and spills from becoming hard-to-remove stains. Water-based soiling agents especially, such as soft drinks, milk, coffee, tea, mud and winter slush cause big maintenance problems because they soak into carpet fibres and backing and rapidly spoil the appearance.

Soil retardants can be applied to old or new *clean* carpeting. Some manufacturers treat carpets before they leave the factory - so remember to check before you treat.

The best-known brand of soil retardant is Scotchgard, made by the 3M Company. If applied correctly, it can be a real boon. After spending time in the 3M testing labs observing control blocks of carpet, treated and untreated, I was impressed. Scotchgard must be applied by a licensed applicator to carpets. (You can do it yourself on new upholstered furniture.) Look under 'Carpet, Curtains and Upholstery Cleaners' in the Yellow Pages. Some firms will specify that they are Scotchgard/3M applicators.

Just because carpets are protected by a soil retardant doesn't mean you can relax. You must still keep up your regular routine of carpet cleaning and maintenance. Your carpets will last much longer and look much better. Remember, when you start noticing that your carpets look bad, it's too late.

Anti-static agents

Static electricity is the mild shock produced when you touch a metal object after walking across a carpet. It is the

result of friction. While not harmful, the shock can be irritating. And static electricity has a magnetic effect on dust particles in the air. By eliminating static, you keep your carpet cleaner. Some carpeting contains a small amount of stainless steel fibre which dissipates static electricity. For carpeting that lacks this feature, applying anti-static agents to the carpet immediately after installation can help the problem.

Shampooing the carpet

If your carpets haven't had proper maintenance, and you think they are too far gone, a major cleaning, washing, or, as most people call it, shampooing, is needed. There are several ways to determine when shampooing is needed:

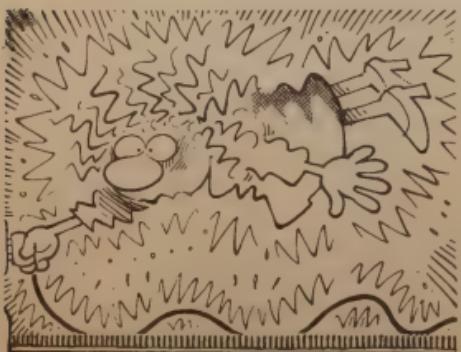
1. Carpet is matted and sticky.
2. Compare with a saved remnant of your carpet. Many carpets become dirty and dark so gradually that you don't realise it's happening. (Remember, of course, that every carpet loses some colour by fading, age and daily wear and tear.)
3. You can see a grimy circle (three-foot radius) around the TV chair.

4. A dust storm develops when you walk across it.

You have two choices to get the job done. Do it yourself, or call a professional. I am the first to push independence and 'do your own thing', but I caution you about the pitfalls of shampooing your own carpet. It is not necessarily a complicated job to do your own, but don't be deceived by the propaganda of trouble-free, money-saving, automatic, do-it-all-yourself machinery. The operator of the machine has to have some knowledge and the ability to adapt to different carpet-cleaning requirements, or else a poor cleaning job, overwetting, or fibre and backing damage will result. It amazes me that people will spend fifteen hundred pounds on a carpet, then attack it with powerful cleaning gear without any experience whatsoever.

Another pitfall is cost-value miscalculations. Take, for example, a fourteen by twenty living room carpet, which a professional might do for thirty pounds. A woman and her husband (who is missing a fishing trip) will drive ten miles across town, rent a big professional machine for £12. They will buy some chemicals for £3. Then they will scratch the family car getting it in and drive another ten miles home. They'll unload the heavy equipment, grunting and groaning. Then they'll move furniture, read directions, and spend most of the Saturday cleaning carpet, and probably will have to drive back for more shampoo. The results will be questionable.

Once they are finished, it is a repeat performance of loading and driving to return the equipment. At the end of the day, they have spent £20 on petrol, hire, shampoos, etc. — not to mention their time; they are dead tired; have experi-



You'll get a charge out of plugs and wet carpets.

enced a bruised hand, three arguments and a broken vase; and come Sunday night the carpet still isn't dry in places. I've cleaned carpets for twenty years, and always do my own because I know how and have the equipment available, but I would never do my own if I had to round up and rent the mediocre machines available and go through all that. I couldn't afford it and wouldn't enjoy the hassle.



The reason why carpets get dirty faster after shampooing is . . . most 'miracle' systems clean only the surface.

Then again, not all so-called professionals are professionals. Some carpet cleaners are opportunists who are after easy money; their training has been by trial-and-error rug-shrinking jobs. The method used in shampooing carpets is important. The TV demonstration of a great contrast when a little foamy carpet shampoo is rubbed on is deceptive. That isn't cleanliness you behold, but the optical brightening most carpets exhibit when wet. Many carpets lightly covered with a foam job appear to gleam and sparkle. However, they can still be filthy. This has been the story with most home carpet-cleaning methods and in fact is the reason you so often hear: 'Never shampoo your carpets, for once you do, they will get dirty faster.' They *do* get dirty faster, but only because the surface was grazed with a dab of shampoo, and

the dirt and soap are carried by the moisture down to the bottom of the fibres, only to emerge quickly when the carpet is in use again. Also, many shampoos leave a dirt-attracting residue on the carpet fibres.

You will be approached with the 'mist' method, the 'dry foam' method, the 'liquid' method, and the latest, the 'steam' method. I wouldn't use any of these on my carpets because they are all obsolete or ineffective in some way. 'Steam' is not what it is cracked up to be, but when steam cleaning hit the market, it positively revolutionised carpet cleaning. It wasn't the steam itself but the 'extraction' process that was so novel.



For heavily soiled carpet — agitate with a shampooer and rinse with an extractor.

Cleaning solution is injected by force into the carpet, and a super-duper wet vacuum is used immediately to pull almost all the moisture back out. It is my opinion that steam extraction alone generally won't clean an old, dirty carpet: rotary motion or scrubbing action with shampoo should be applied to the carpet to loosen and deep-clean it, and this should be followed by extracting to remove all dirt, soap, etc. Rake or sweep the carpet to a stand-up position to dry after shampooing.

The bonnet system

One new method used with success commercially which I feel will be adopted for home use is the spin-clean, or bonnet, system.

The bonnet system is a surface-cleaning procedure in which the carpet is wiped or rubbed clean with a heavy cloth 'bonnet' or towel. It is not to be mistaken for a carpet deep-cleaning operation. It is a carpet maintenance technique intended to never allow a carpet to get into a condition of needing a major shampooing. I have been in an office which has used this system for seven years. The carpets, even in the reception area, are clean and new-looking.

The bonnet treatment done twice monthly, or more often in a home, is fast, easy and inexpensive. It is a good maintenance system that delays or precludes shampooing, and keeps carpets fresh and consistently clean.

The process is quite simple. Assuming you have a good daily vacuuming routine, most dirt will accumulate on top of the carpet rather than being transferred to the roots. A simple nylon pad, (3M's Scotchbrite carpet pad), is moistened with a carpet-cleaning solution. Then it is mounted under a rotary floor machine such as the Victor Sprite (see Equipment Chart) and run over the carpet. The bonnet will pick up and absorb surface grime and soils. The floor buffer spins in a rotating motion on the carpet. When the pad becomes dirty, it is turned over and the process is repeated. When both sides are dirty, hose the pad with a powerful spray or wash in a washing machine.

For heavily used areas like commercial offices, a three-times-a-week application might be necessary; in a home, twice a

month would be just right. It does take a special solution, obtainable from 3M to produce best results, so check with 3M if you plan to try the bonnet system.

Although this is not yet a well-known system, it will be, and small oscillating or rotary machines will be feasible to own. Most 'household gimmick' machines aren't as fast and effective as a good commercial unit. Four or five neighbours or relatives might go in together on a shared machine. I like the bonnet system because it keeps carpets at a consistent level of cleanliness and replaces the old inefficient up-and-down approach to cleaning. There is also something spiritually uplifting about a clean fresh expanse of carpet.



A simple coat hanger protects curtains from damage during carpet cleaning.

COPING WITH CARPET CATASTROPHES

Carpet problems (spills, burns, spots, etc.) are a reality in the home just as they are in the commercial buildings I clean. A puddle of orange squash on your living room carpet will upset you just as surely as a glaring coffee stain on the carpeting in front of a bank teller will turn off customers. A few basic manoeuvres can solve most of these problems (not all, because sometimes a stain is a *stain*), and you can do them as well as (probably better than) a professional.



Basic tools and supplies

Keep the following items on hand to attack fresh spills on your carpets:

- **Neutral detergent**, i.e., one that is advertised as safe for fine fabrics, such as Lux or Stergene. Dilute 20:1 with water to use for spot removal.
- **Common household ammonia**. When using ammonia for spot removal, always dilute with ten parts water. Available at chemists and hardware shops.
- **Nonflammable dry-cleaning fluid**, such as Beaucaire, (contains perchloroethylene, used by professional dry cleaners). Use straight from the container. Do not use petrol, lighter fluid, or carbon tetrachloride.
- **Denatured alcohol**, in the form of Meths or surgical spirits (obtainable from Boots).
- **Distilled white vinegar**. Dilute fifty-fifty with water.
- **Clean white towelling cloths**.
- **A soft-bristled scrubbing brush**.
- **A spatula or putty knife**.
- **A wet-dry vacuum**.

Note: try to avoid wet cleaning on wool. Use dry-cleaning solvents whenever possible.

Remember

Keep cleaning solutions and tools out of reach of little children, for their safety. I would suggest you store your spot removal tools and supplies in a small plastic hand carrying tray or basket. This will hold and organise your supplies safely for quick attack on spots.

STAIN/SPOT	COMPOSITION	METHOD
acids (toilet cleaner, drain cleaner, vinegar)	hydrochloric, acetic, and other acids	Apply a solution of baking soda and water until, by feel and smell, spot has disappeared. Then apply ammonia solution and rinse with cold water.
alcoholic beverages	alcohol, sugar, tannin, colouring	Apply detergent solution; blot. Apply vinegar solution; blot. Apply ammonia solution; blot. Bleach with three to five per cent hydrogen peroxide or sodium perborate if necessary. Both of these are available at Boots and other chemists, but ask about details of dilution of hydrogen peroxide. Rinse with cold water; blot dry.
alkali (lye, concentrated ammonia, TSP – trisodium phosphate)	strong alkaline compounds	Apply vinegar solution, then rinse and blot.
butter, margarine	vegetable dye, milk, salt, preservatives, vegetable and animal fats and oils	Apply dry-cleaning solvent; blot. Apply detergent solution; blot dry. Rinse; blot dry.
blood	albumin, fat, fibrin, iron	Scrape off surface. Apply cool detergent solution; blot. Apply cool ammonia solution; blot. Rinse; blot dry. Apply a rust remover like Movol (from Boots and other chemists). Follow by three to five per cent hydrogen peroxide if stain remains.
candle wax	petroleum, animal and vegetable fats and oils; basic dyes	Scrape off surface. Apply dry-cleaning solvent; blot. Repeat.

chewing gum	resins, sugar	If hard and solid, apply chewing gum remover aerosol which contains a freezing fluid (ice cubes in a plastic bag will work sometimes) until the gum is brittle. Break into pieces and vacuum up. Apply dry-cleaning solvent to residue.
chocolate	oil, grease, cocoa, butter, colouring, sugar, milk	Scrape off surface. Apply cool detergent solution; blot. Apply ammonia solution; blot. Apply vinegar solution; blot. Rinse; blot dry.
cigarette burns	melted fibres (or worse – a hole.)	If the burn is slight, rub with dry steel wool, or, if you feel confident, trim the tufts. If the burn is bad, ask a professional to 'doughnut cut' the damaged area and plug a new piece in, or do it yourself.
coffee	tannin, sugar	Rub with a paste of raw egg yolk; rinse. If stain is old, apply a few drops of denatured alcohol; rinse.
crayon	wax, grease, pigments	Apply dry-cleaning solvent; blot. Apply detergent solution. Rinse; blot dry.
food colouring/dyes	artificial food colours, propylene-glycol	Apply detergent solution, blotting frequently (a dried stain can easily spread when wet). Repeat until towel picks up no colour. Apply ammonia solution; blot. Rinse; blot dry.
grass stains	tannin, acids, oils, chlorophyll	Apply acetone (but don't use it on any acetate fibres), to remove chlorophyll; blot. Apply detergent solution; blot. Rinse; blot. Apply ammonia solution; blot. Apply vinegar solution; blot. Rinse; blot dry. If necessary, apply three to five per cent hydrogen peroxide; apply this with caution.

grease, oil	petroleum derivatives	Apply paint thinner. Work towards centre to avoid ring. Blot. Apply light detergent solution; rinse.
ink (ballpoint)	basic or soluble aniline dyes, insoluble organic solvents, oils, resins, gums, binding agents such as shellac, varnish, or petroleum	Apply dry-cleaning solvent; blot. Apply denatured alcohol; blot. Apply amyl acetate or acetone (nail polish remover, but <i>don't</i> use it on acetate fibres!) If stain remains, apply rust remover or oxalic acid solution. (Obtainable from Boots and some other chemists.) Professional plugging or bleaching may be necessary.
ink (Indian)	pigment dispersed in water with a binder	Apply dry-cleaning solvent. Apply detergent solution; blot. Apply ammonia solution; blot. Rinse; blot dry. (This stain is often permanent and the spot may have to be plugged.)
iodine, mercurochrome, merthiolate	alcohol, iodine, mercury compounds	Apply denatured alcohol (Boots) blot. Apply ammonia solution, blot. Rinse. (Some stain may remain.)
jam, jelly	fruit pulp, sugar, tannin, preservatives	Apply detergent solution; blot. Apply vinegar solution; blot. Rinse; blot dry.
ketchup tomato sauce	tomatoes, salt, sugar, spices, tannin, vinegar, onions	Apply cool detergent or ammonia solution; blot. If stain remains, apply three to five per cent hydrogen peroxide. Rinse; blot dry.
lipstick	pigment or dye in fat, waxes and oils	Scrape off surface, taking care not to spread the stain. Apply dry-cleaning solvent; blot. Apply detergent solution; blot. Apply ammonia solution; blot. Apply vinegar solution; blot. Rinse; blot.
mildew	greyish or brownish spots or splotches produced by fungus	Apply solution of one teaspoon disinfectant cleaner to one cup water; blot. Apply ammonia solution; blot. Rinse; blot. Keep area dry.

milk, cream, ice cream	sugar, butterfat, colouring and flavouring agents	Apply ammonia solution; rinse. If area is large, shampoo afterwards.
mud	soil with greases and oils, clay, iron	Allow to dry and brush or scrape off as much as possible. Apply detergent or ammonia solution; blot. Rinse; blot dry. If stain remains, apply dry- cleaning solvent; blot dry.
mustard	mustard seed, vinegar, salt, spices, oils	Apply detergent solution; blot. Apply vinegar solution; blot. If stain remains apply rust remover (eg Movol) or hydrogen peroxide solution; blot. Do not use ammonia or alkalies.
nail polish	dye or pigment in liquid cellulose acetate base, solvent, plasticizer	Apply dry-cleaning solvent. Apply amyl acetate, if available, acetone or nail polish remover – <i>test first</i> . If stain remains, apply detergent solution; blot dry. Apply ammonia solution; blot. Apply vinegar solution; blot. Rinse; blot dry.
odours	airborne particles emanating from organic matter in the carpet	Apply solution of one teaspoon disinfectant cleaner to one cup water. Follow with water-soluble deodorant. If an odour has permeated the carpet <i>and</i> the backing or mat, it is nearly impossible to get out. Ask a reliable carpet cleaner what they use or ask them to do it for you.
paint (oil based)	pigments, drying oils, resins, gums, volatile solvents	Check label on paint for specific thinner or solvent to use, or apply dry-cleaning solvent. If stain remains, cover it with towels dampened with dry-cleaning solvent or paint thinner to soften for several hours; blot with solvent. Apply several drops of detergent solution and work into the stain; blot. Apply ammonia solution; blot. Rinse with warm water; blot dry.

paint (water based)	water, latex, pigments, emulsifiers, preservatives	Apply detergent solution; blot. Apply ammonia solution; blot. Rinse; blot. If a paint spill is dried, a little lacquer thinner will soften and remove. (It could also melt the carpet, so test first.)
rust	iron oxide	Rub with steel wool, then apply rust remover like Movol if necessary.
shoe polish	waxes, resins, solvents, dyes, shellac, alcohol, tannin	Apply dry-cleaning solvent. Apply detergent solution; blot. Apply ammonia solution; blot. Rinse; blot dry. If stain remains, bleaching with three to five per cent hydrogen peroxide or professional repair may be necessary.
urine	urea, uric acid, ammonia, organic acids, pigments, cholesterol, albumins, proteoses	Blot up as much as possible. Apply detergent solution, then ammonia solution; blot. Apply vinegar solution; blot. Rinse; blot dry. If stain remains, apply a rust remover like Movol or oxalic acid solution; bleaching with three to five per cent hydrogen peroxide might be necessary. (Urine stains may remove dye from fibres.)
vomit	food, mucus, albumins, acids	Blot up as much as possible. Apply detergent solution; blot. Apply ammonia solution; blot. Apply vinegar solution; blot. Rinse; blot dry.

For spots not listed, match them up to those with a similar composition and use a similar approach. Upholstery can be treated in much the same way as carpet. Remember to follow the six steps:

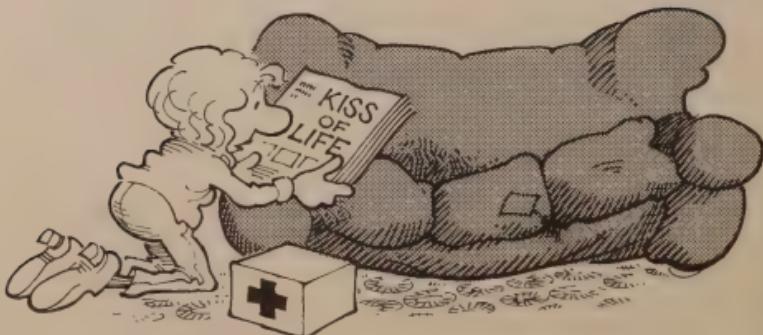
1. Catch it fast.
2. Blot or scrape.
3. Test (go at it carefully).
4. Work towards centre.
5. Soak up or blot – don't rub.
6. Absorb.

Be patient – give the chemicals time to work. Don't expect all stains to come out immediately – most take some time.

Bleaching is a last resort, and I don't generally recommend it, unless you want a little adventure or a new conversation piece (spot).

Most old stains and spots can't be removed, so don't get your hopes up too high about that three-year-old cherry lolly stain you've had the lamp table over. It might have to remain until you replace the rug.

What to do about furniture



'What should I do about furniture?' is a question I'm repeatedly asked. As a male, my attitude toward furniture is, 'I dislike moving it, and I dislike buying it even more.' A woman has a finer appreciation for furniture because she is often the one who chooses it. And much of her time is spent maintaining it and caring for its appearance.

In an attempt to eliminate both of my furniture frustrations, I designed most of the furniture of a home we built in the mountains. Our living room had an octagonal 'conversation pit' padded with vinyl-backed cushions. Twelve or thirteen people could sit comfortably. A two-stair landing faced into the living room area and ten or twelve more visitors could sit on plush padded stairs looking into the living room. This house didn't

have a single piece of furniture except for the beds and the dining room suite. I built the stereo and bookcases in, to eliminate cabinets and stands. Beds were built to the floor and other technical adjustments were made to eliminate the clutter and upkeep of furniture. Our home was beautiful and usable for family and youth groups of up to forty, and I didn't have to buy furniture or move it.

But for most of you, furniture not only must be bought and moved, it must be cleaned. So the question becomes, 'How do I keep my furniture looking nice without a lot of time and effort?'

Attempts to answer this question have greatly stimulated the sales of 'miracle' furniture polishes. Think about the message given by all the TV furniture polish commercials: 'get a faster shine'; 'real

wax beauty instantly'; 'helps keep that just polished look'.

Furniture care is not that simple.

There are some ways to cut down on the time spent caring for furniture and make it last longer. Notice I said 'ways', not 'way'. It isn't done with a squirt of magic aerosol furniture polish as a TV or magazine ad might suggest.

My approach to furniture cleaning is more preventive than maintenance-orientated. Buy high-quality furniture – expensive, well-manufactured furniture costs less to maintain than 'el cheapo' stuff. Cheap furniture loses its crisp, elegant look rapidly and becomes conspicuously dull and shabby-looking. Once in this decrepit condition, it takes a lot of time and supplies to maintain it. And it rarely looks any better cleaned and polished than it did before you started. Select carefully and get good quality. Paying a little more cash will save a lot of your most precious commodity, personal time.

Choosing furniture with an eye to cleanability

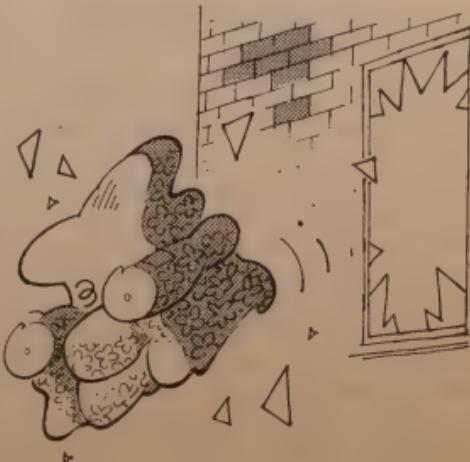
The design and style of furniture you choose will determine how many hours per day, week, or year you will have to give to maintaining it. Elaborate hand carving with lines and grooves bordered by silk, velvet, and lace and topped with stained glass is going to take more time and material to keep looking good. You are the sole judge on this one. If the prestige or decor of your home calls for the elaborate unit, *you* have to decide the long-range value of owning it. No matter what you decide, check the furniture and make sure all the surfaces can be maintained. The wood should have a finish –

not just an oiled surface or a coloured stain, but a *membrane* finish to prevent dirt and cleaning materials from penetrating into the wood. Lighter wood furniture shows dust less, is easier to clean, and keeps good-looking longer than darker furniture. Natural or bare wood that needs constant feeding or oiling is a pain to maintain, and, in my opinion, looks shabby in a short period of time.

Metal should have a smooth finish that is not pitted or engraved. It should be coated with baked or other hard-surface coating. Stainless steel and chrome are durable, but require a lot of effort to keep clean and bright.

Is it cleanable? Fabric will generally be the most used and abused part of furniture. Spillage on furniture is as common as on carpet, believe it or not. Some fabric, basketry, and woven twines look superb, but grease stains and other marks on them can never be removed.

Will its good looks last? Some fabrics look great when cleaned or new but after



a few people sit on them, they become tangled and matted. You've all seen velvet or fur-type material after it has been sat on. The user's seat print remains, and you have better things to do than go around brushing up the cushions to make them look good. Pick a fabric that 'restores', or comes back to life, after use. Select a hard-finish fabric for dining room chairs that are used constantly. White or light-coloured fabrics (especially solid colours) show and accentuate every spot. Fabrics with some colour blend or a pattern hide dirt better. Again, this is a matter of taste – but try to make it easy on yourself. Remember, furniture exists for your use and comfort.

Protecting against dirt. Although I question the value of some soil retardants on some carpets, I don't question it on upholstered furniture. Scotchgard (a 3M trade name), which you can buy and apply, is a lifesaver for most upholstery and for you personally. It is an excellent protection for most fabrics, making them more maintainable.

Keeping furniture looking nice

Convinced that the secret of furniture maintenance is in the bottle or can of polish, the majority of us use too much of it. We build up layers of gunk which result in more work and faster surface deterioration. A treated cloth that leaves no oil or residue, yet picks up dust, is the best thing to use. Throw away your feather dusters. They are the least effective. You can purchase paper dustcloths, like J cloths or Vileda dusters (from good hardware or department stores), which last and last. Then you can throw

them away. The Elbie Dustless Duster (see equipment chart on page 22) is more expensive but very effective.

The professional approach might give you new ideas about furniture cleaning. We clean thousands of desktops, tabletops, chairs, stands, racks, and cabinets every night. In most of our cleaning, we wipe with treated cloths to remove dust. When fingermarks have to be removed, we use a spray bottle of diluted neutral cleaner or a water-damp cloth to wipe and dry-buff to a natural sheen. We avoid using polish where the finish can maintain its own lustre.

When you need to polish, select one type of polish (choose one with a low-sheen gloss) and use it consistently. The reason for this is simple. Often your furniture surfaces will come out dull and streaked because your new polish is not compatible with the old polish.

Select your polish on these merits:

1. Ease of application
2. Length of protection time
3. Non-smearing and -streaking
4. Safety (you want a polish that's safe for your furniture surfaces – and for you to work with)
5. Pleasing scent
6. Easy buffing
7. Ability to hide superficial scratches and blemishes

Types of polish

Liquid or paste solvent. These are the most common polishes like Mansion or Lavendo. Hard to apply. Excellent water and abrasion resistance. Low gloss, but durable.

Clear oil polishes. Mineral oil, vegetable oil, turpentine blend used to 'feed' wood. Use on bare wood and sealed wood. Has high gloss, but leaves a greasy film that

collects dust and fingerprints.

Oil emulsion polishes. Cream type, such as enriched Min Cream. Good cleaning properties, but same drawbacks as clear oil.

Water or oil wax emulsion (aerosol or spray). These include Sparkle, Mr Sheen etc. Contains all components needed in a good polish: protects, enhances the beauty, and is easy to dust.

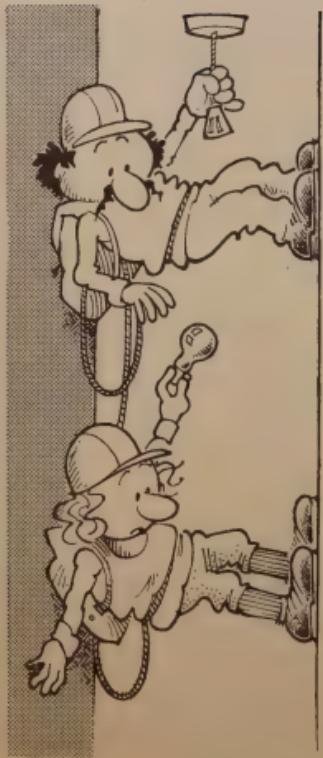
Cleaning fabric upholstery

This is commonly referred to as 'shampooing furniture'. To remove stains on clean upholstery, apply the same principles you do with carpet (see Chapter 10). A surface spot can be wiped or cleaned with an applicator dampened with cleaning solution and dried with a

dry, absorbent cloth. If the fabric is thoroughly soiled, it should be washed with an upholstery cleaning solution or shampoo, then rinsed out. This is where problems arise in a do-it-yourself upholstery cleaning job. Cleaning solution is scrubbed on the dirt and the upholstery fabric seems to be cleaner. Actually the surface dirt has been loosened and has sunk deeper into the fabric, along with the cleaning solution. The fabric appears clean, but it isn't. The fabric is soaked with chemical, which leaves it sticky and matted down. Get dirt and moisture out with an upholstery extractor attachment, or even a good wet-dry vacuum. Soon after the cleaning application, rinse with clear water.

Always be sure to check manufacturers' cleaning instructions.

Reaching high places



If heights make you shake in your boots, find a daredevil and bake him some scones. Let him climb to clean off a cobweb, change a light bulb, paint or wash the ceiling. One of my customers had a husband full of ambition and desire to clean, but he was terrified of high places. She would hire me to wash all the high areas, saving the low stuff for his cleaning enthusiasm. One year while doing his low section, he was on a plank only six feet off the floor and caught the phobia. He lay down on the plank, dug his whitened fingernails into the wood of the plank, and froze there. His wife, unable to talk him down from the dizzying six-foot height, ended up calling the fire department (siren and all!). They finally dislodged the husband's death grip on the plank and helped him onto floor level safely, but he was never sound enough emotionally to assist in cleaning again.

Make sure that you adjust or limit the reaching of tall areas to fit your resources, age, nerves (and your helpers' bravery). But don't be outwitted by hard-to-reach areas. 'Once I got going, it only took me ten minutes' is the wail of many end-of-day housekeepers. This long preparation time is the bane of cleaning in high places. Access contri-

butes greatly to success of such cleaning, yet the old shaky ladder and step are about the extent of most homes' scaffolding. More energy, time, and emotion are used going up and down the ladder or stool than actually doing the job. And all of our effort, worry, tool procurement and arrangement seems to be focused on the few minutes we'll actually be performing the job, instead of trying to save the hours getting in position or location to start it.

As a professional housecleaner, I too have to weigh the same factors a housewife does. The equipment needed to get at the work has to be light enough to be manageable, and small enough to fit in tight areas and keep from scratching walls and woodwork. It must be *sturdy* and *safe* enough to ensure no falls. The basics twenty-five years of housecleaning have taught me to use are:

A good ladder

A plain old common ladder is one of the best all-around tools. It is versatile, manageable, and safe . . . if you select an



appropriate model. For household use, the perfect stepladder size is five feet high. I have found that four-foot ladders are too short to reach and work on an eight-foot ceiling. A six-foot ladder is too high. It batters the house when you carry it around. A five-foot ladder is just right for most household cleaning operations. Instead of buying several creaky wooden ladders for £20 each during your lifetime, buy a five-foot good professional



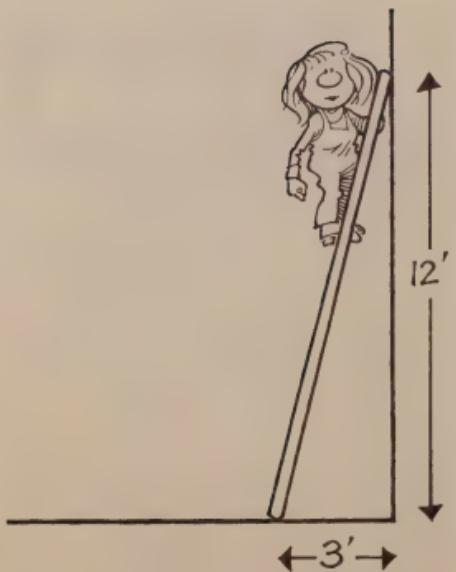
four feet
(too short)



six feet
(too tall)



five feet
(just right)



Using a ladder — angle one foot from wall for every four feet of height. Never stand on the top rung.

aluminium ladder for £80 or so. You'll never regret it. It is strong and safe to use anywhere, and it will probably outlast you, even counting the ten years it may add to your life. It can be used outside on rough ground, and bad weather or dry storage won't hurt it.

For higher reaches every household should have a tall ladder, and I feel the perfect one for this purpose is an eighteen-foot, two-piece extension ladder. It will reduce to ten feet for storage in the laundry room or garage exterior and lengthen out safely to sixteen feet — enough to get the cat out of the tree, fix the aerial, or paint the exterior every five years. Aluminium is lighter, but in an extension ladder for home use, I prefer wood for strength, safety, and electrical

protection. Don't paint wooden ladders — paint hides breaks, cracks, and flaws and is slippery when wet. Boiled linseed oil is best for maintaining wooden ladders.

Make yourself a box

The harmless-looking 'bench' is often used. It has a narrow base and a deceptively sturdy top. But it's too unbalanced and risky to use as a standing or cleaning tool. To replace the old bench, which has battered many a body, a simply constructed box of three-quarter inch plywood is inexpensive and far superior. I'd suggest dimensions of fifteen by twenty by twenty-eight inches (see illustration). I have used a similar unit safely and effectively for years. It is called a three-position stool. Laid flat on its side or end, it gives you three low heights to work from. Hand holes can be cut in the box's side to move it or use it for storage when it is not in use. It can also serve as a baby crib, or an extra chair when company comes.

Walk the plank for safety

The last and most useful tool to conquer the unreachable places is a sturdy, ordinary two by twelve inch plank eight to ten feet long. Purchase it at a timber yard and make sure it has no loose knots, cracks, or weak areas. Sand off the corners and rough edges for handling, and it is ready to use. Don't paint or varnish it, because when it is wet or soapy, it will become slippery. The idea is to combine the stepladder, ordinary ladder, box and plank whenever possible to keep you at your working area with the minimum of footsteps. If you need to reach higher areas than can be reached with this combination, rent the necessary equipment.

Safe shortcuts to difficult jobs.

To clean a stair landing — lean an ordinary stepladder padded with a towel at the top against the wall with the base angled into the stairs. A plank extending from a small stepladder to a rung of the large one puts you in an easy position to clean the walls or to paint them.

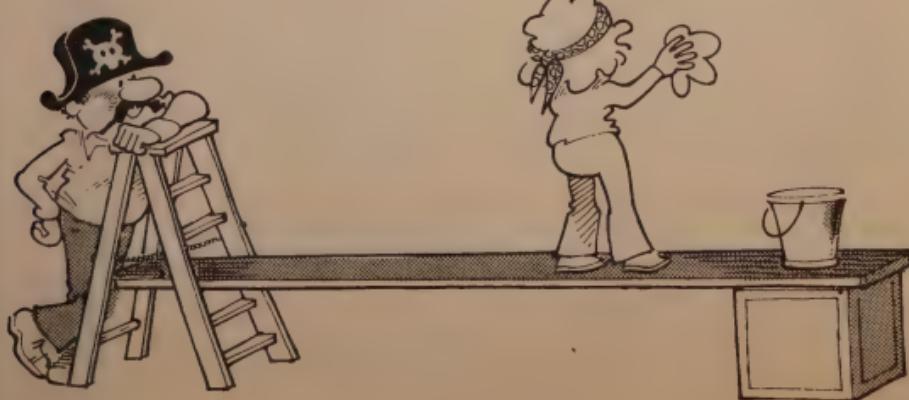


because you will seldom use it around the house.

A plank, though it may be scary to you at first, is a safe area on which to work if you are reasonably awake. The slight spongy give you will feel on the plank is easy to adapt to. Planks were only fatal to blindfolded pirates when they had to walk off the end. Looking up at the ceiling and moving towards the box end of the plank puts you in the same circumstance as the pirates. Always keep an extra sponge or empty bucket at the end of the plank so a nudge of the toe reminds you to stop walking. (This is a case where 'kicking the bucket' is advisable for longevity.) The plank-and-ladder combination is especially effective to use on

high stairwells. On stair landings and other open areas, you can work out a combination (such as the one above). It will make you love yourself for your brilliance.

The basic reason for working from a plank or ladder is safety in reaching high areas. Most of the time, doing ceilings in a house from a ladder, you are only two feet off the floor. When in a stairwell, you are higher over the stairs, but with walls two feet on both sides of you and with a ladder at both ends, there is little risk of falls. I've seen twenty ladder accidents



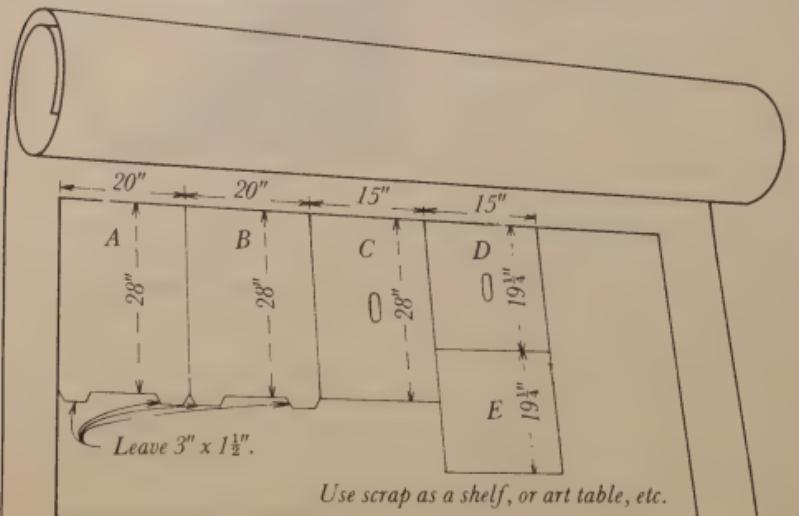
Directions for the construction of your own
housecleaning box

Materials needed:

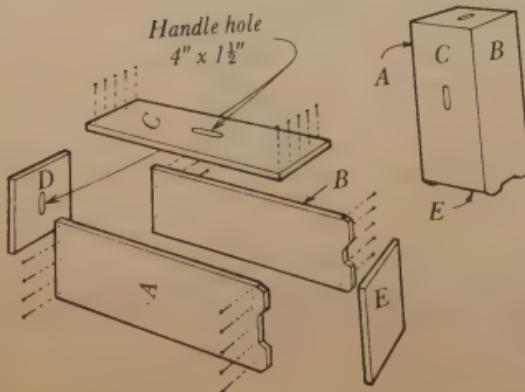
- 1 sheet of $\frac{3}{4}$ " exterior plywood
- 3 dozen $2\frac{1}{2}$ " nails
- 1 small bottle of white glue
- sandpaper
- 1 pint of clear varnish (or polyurethane)

Just lay out the following plan and assemble per directions. If your husband has sold his expensive power saw to buy you a new vacuum, don't worry — a cheap old sabre saw will work fine!

(You can make it a little larger or a little smaller to custom-fit yourself.)



Assembly — nail together and glue all edges.



for every plank accident. Ordinary ladders must be tilted at the proper angle to keep from slipping down or tumbling over. One foot out from the base of the wall for every four feet up is just right. Keep your cleaning solution, tools, paint, and other working materials with you as much as possible. Ascending or descending a ladder or a plank for every dip depletes strength, wastes time, and exposes you more often to mishap.

Keep your working stuff near you

I've heard claims that a woman walks eight to fifteen miles a day doing housework. I wouldn't doubt it. I used to walk one mile per room I cleaned until I learned to keep my cleaning equipment within reach. Too many people place their tools and buckets in a central pile in the room and walk three, four, or even five or six steps back and forth constantly during a project. They spend fifty per cent of their time and energy travelling. If you need the exercise, continue to use a central pile. If you want to get the job done and have energy left for a tennis game, bowling or other personal activities, work out how to keep your tools (sponges, buckets, cloths, screwdriver, etc.) within your reach. (For example, if you are washing cupboards, put your equipment on the worktop instead of on the floor – same with painting.) If you hang the bucket on the ladder or hold it in your hand, it will save the bend and dip all the way to the floor and back up. Try it – you'll be amazed at the time and effort you save.

A trick I've tried without much success is moving a folding stepladder without moving the buckets or tools. I won about sixty per cent. The other forty per cent

have cost me wet carpets, skinned shins, painted faces and starting over again. It is also extremely risky to tie or lay the plank on flower bases, metal railings, mantel shelves or other ledges. Most of these were designed to be looked at, not to support a hundred and fifty pounds or more of plank, solutions and person. Mortar is not stout. It beats rocks and bricks for compressed strength, but not tensile strength. Place ladders on supports where strength is sure. When you've finished your cleaning job, the two ladders can be stored in a small area. You'll use the plank for many things. It is one of the best under-a-tenner investments you will ever make.

A cleaning towel (see chapter thirteen) slipped over each end of the ladder will keep it from marking your walls. A dry sponge under each leg will prevent it from slipping if the surface the legs rest on is questionable. Plimsolls are comfy to clean in.

A final word of advice: put your name on your ladders and planks. When your neighbours spot them, they will want to try out your new system of reaching high places.





Walls and ceilings made simple



I once quoted to wash walls in six large offices, a long hall, lobby, entrances, and storage areas in a Massey-Ferguson tractor dealer's office. I was the lowest bid at the price of £130. Our new crew was busy on the scheduled day, so I tackled the job alone. Seven hours later, I had it finished and more than a few compliments on the quality of the job. On another occasion, I washed all the walls, ceilings, and wood-work in a three-bedroom modern home in less than one day – alone. I'm no more a 'super' wall and ceiling cleaner than you are. In fact, I'm certain that many of you could keep up with me or beat me on my best day, if you'd use the same approach I did.

There are two reasons why wall and ceiling cleaning will become one of your favourite housecleaning tasks when you do it my way: (1) It is easy and trouble-

free and (2) The delight of seeing the surface come clean is terrific. In fact, you are going to find washing your walls and ceilings so easy and satisfying, you'll want to wash your friends' walls and ceilings just to show off. Your days of struggling with a half-filled bucket of grimy wall-washing solution will end as you finish this chapter, if you follow the simple principles it sets forth.

We outlined the basic principle of cleaning in Chapter 6, so now for the technique and tools of wall cleaning. Your height, your arm strength, or the degree of dirt accumulated doesn't make much difference to the time and effort it takes to clean walls and ceilings. Using your head and the right tools *will* make a difference. One of the first and most important (and least known) tools of housecleaning is a chemically treated

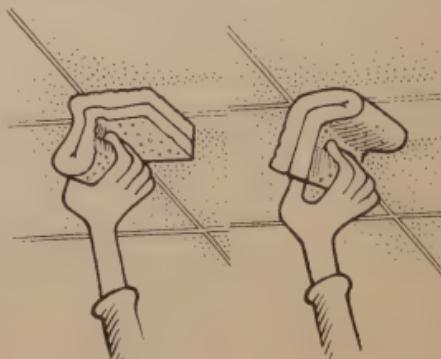
rubber sponge called a *dry sponge*. They are impregnated with some secret formula that makes the sponge super-absorbent and gently abrasive for removing dirt. Dry sponges are generally tan or red in colour and come as flat seven by six by half inch pads. Dry sponges come wrapped in cellophane to keep the embedded chemical fresh. When you unwrap them, they will feel dry and spongy. Never, never use water on them or get them wet (not a drop) — or they will become useless for cleaning. Most people use dry sponges for cleaning wallpaper.

On white ceiling acoustic tiles and on most flat gloss- or emulsion-painted walls, one wipe of a dry sponge will remove the dirt. It will not remove fingerprints or flyspecks — only the film of dirt. In most homes, dry-sponging the ceiling will leave it perfect. I've washed behind a dry sponge several times, not believing that the sponge could get all the dirt off, but it did — every bit of it. In fact, on some porous walls or painted surfaces where the dirt is embedded deeply a dry sponge is superior to washing. Even on walls that are smoke damaged, ten minutes of dry-sponging the room prior to washing will reduce washing time and expense more than fifty per cent. When dry sponging, you don't have to stop to dip or rinse. Just get to the surface and wipe in four-foot lengths (or shorter if your arms are shorter). The sponge will absorb the dirt and begin to get black. It will hold the dirt as you clean along, but soon its saturation point is reached and you must switch the surface area of the sponge and keep going. The residue that falls from the sponge won't stain or stick, and it is easily vacuumed up after the job is done.

Each pad-type sponge has eight good

surfaces, if used correctly. When the sponge is black on both sides, throw it away. Washing them doesn't work. Dry sponges cost about ninety pence and are worth ten times that for the job they do and the time they save (see page 22).

The proper way to hold a dry sponge is illustrated here:



A dry sponge won't clean enamel or greasy surfaces, so don't be disappointed when you make a swipe across the kitchen or bathroom wall and nothing radical happens.

If you go into the bedroom and make a wipe across the ceiling and can't see where you have just been, the ceiling doesn't need cleaning and the walls probably don't either. Just clean the light fixtures, the fingerprints, the woodwork, and take off the rest of the hour you allowed for bedroom cleaning. Once the dry-sponging is out of the way, the remaining areas, not cleaned with a dry sponge, will have to be washed. This can be accomplished rather simply if the right tools and methods are used.

Your rag is your worst enemy

There is no question that the most famous household cleaning tool is the

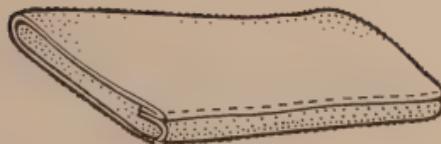
simple little item known as a rag. Your rags have been salvaged from ancient sheets, tattered nappies, worn-out T-shirts, curtains and other fabric scraps. Using a rag to clean with is like using a rake to comb your hair: rather ineffective. For five hundred years cloth designers have been working to develop fabrics today that repel liquids and stains. They've succeeded and we have scores of fabrics today that resist moisture — which makes them terrible for cleaning. Yet we can't seem to resist saving trouser legs, old slips, and a thousand other unsuitable fabrics for cleaning rags. *Don't do it.* I'm certain that one thing that makes the professional a three times faster — and better — cleaner than the homemaker is the fact that amateurs are hung up on rags. Rags are only good for wiping up paint, stuffing rag dolls, blowing your nose, or signalling surrender when the cleaning gets you down.

Henceforth, the term rag must be banished from your housecleaning vocabulary and from your basket of cleaning tools. The rag in your housecleaning tool bag will be replaced with an item called a cleaning cloth.

The noble cleaning cloth

A cleaning cloth is made from a salvaged towel or new heavy piece of cotton towelling. I've had a lot of questions as to what kind of towelling to use. The big worry is that the new poly/cotton blends are not as absorbent as the old pure cotton towels. *Not so.* They are an improvement. The polyester is used for the base fabric and the cotton to make the pile.

Moisture rarely gets to the base anyway, and the polyester dries faster and resists wrinkles. (A wrinkle-resistant cleaning



cloth — now *that's class!*) But do be sure to use towelling with high cotton content.

First cut the towel into an eighteen by eighteen inch flat piece, then fold it over and sew the one long side, leaving it like a tube, open on both ends. Be sure to hem the edge by folding it twice. You have a hand-sized surface of thick, absorbent towel cloth to efficiently cover every inch of surface it passes over. It is not like the old bedsheet that just streaks and smears the film around. (We wouldn't think of drying *ourselves* on a piece of sheet after a bath.)

If you refold your cleaning towels and use both sides, you have eight efficient surfaces to use; turn the towel inside out and you have eight more. That makes sixteen surfaces on one little cleaning cloth. They are fifty per cent more efficient and safer than rags. (Terry cleaning cloths are great to protect the hands from scrapes, cuts, and ripped fingernails.) I often clean an entire large bedroom using only three cleaning cloths. When you are finished and the cleaning cloths are damp and dirty, throw them in the wash.

You don't have to use much soap, because the towels will be full of the cleaner you've been using. The towels will come out as clean as they were before you used them. Don't hang them on the line or they will be stiff as a board and impossible to use the next time: be sure to tumble-dry them. Twenty pads will clean your entire house and, if washed and stored properly, will last for years. If

you use the towels a little drier, the sheens and streaks you often see on kitchen walls or other glossy enamelled areas will be polished off as you wash along.

Your basic cleaning tools

The dry sponge and cleaning cloth are the main professional tools you need to do most housecleaning, so don't prepare yourself a long list of materials and equipment. The rest of the items you probably already have around the house, so round them up: one empty bucket, one bucket half full of warm water, an ordinary cellulose sponge (that fits your hand), and a jug of your favourite cleaner (mine is ammonia). That's it!

(I know what you are thinking now. 'Wow, wouldn't a two-compartment bucket be super.' No... it wouldn't. They are, without question, one of the most worthless instruments ever palmed off on a housecleaner. Take my word for it.)

Mix your cleaning solution following directions on the container. Make sure your cleaning compound is one capable of cutting the dirt you want to remove. Ammonia or good commercial neutral cleaner concentrates will be fine unless you are dealing with an extremely grease-laden kitchen, where a little

ammoniated wax stripper or degreaser added to the solution will make the job much easier.

Before beginning, reinforce your attitude. I've read books and articles on cleaning which say, 'Allow yourself a day to a week for each room.' You are going to clean it, not rebuild it! Allow yourself a couple of hours (maybe three if you anticipate being interrupted). Prolonging a simple job will wear down your initiative and determination.

Cleaning procedure

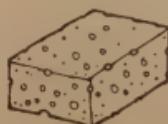
You have your ladder or scaffolding in position, and now you are ready to begin. Your solution should be where you don't have to climb thirty feet to dip your sponge. Placing your solution, or cleaning water, in the right place is extremely important. *Always keep it as close to your working area as possible.* Spilling solution was one of my major problems in my early housecleaning days. I finally learned to put the bucket next to me, not behind me on a table, or in the middle of the floor. Place it in a visible spot. The most common spillage problems are tripping over buckets or moving a piece of furniture, behind which a full bucket of solution is hidden. If you do spill, run for the wet-dry vacuum and get all the moisture out you can. Then rinse with



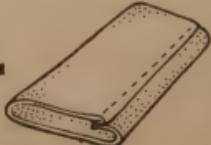
A bucket of warm water with ammonia or neutral cleaner



An empty bucket



A sponge



A cleaning cloth (with eight cleaning surfaces)

*Keep your bucket close to the wall
—not at your feet.*



clear water to get the ammonia, or other cleaning agent, out. Again, remember to fill your buckets only half full (if you fill them to the brim they will be top-heavy and can easily spill), and flush the dirty slops down the toilet regularly (after each room) for if a dirty bucket spills you will have a tough mopping up problem.

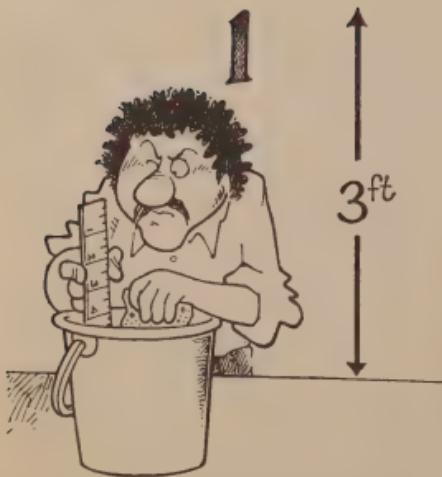
Take a damp sponge and dip it in the solution a quarter of an inch (not all the way in). This will give you plenty of cleaning solution to wet the wall or ceiling and leave the remaining thickness of the sponge dry enough to absorb any water which otherwise would run down your arms or splash into your eyes.

I know all the books say to start at the bottom of the wall and work up, because if you dribble on the lower unwashed wall from the top, it might stain: an old wives' tale. I never do it. In extreme cases with old paint and spectacularly dirty

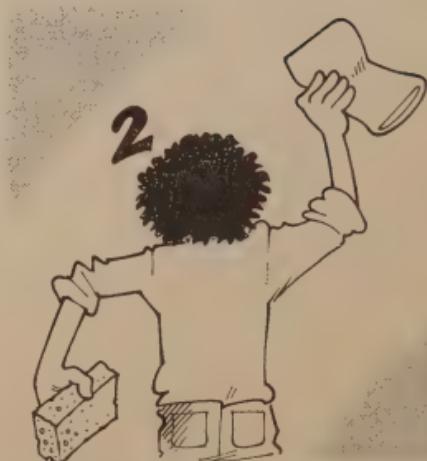
walls it might be wise, but to me, it is discouraging to start at the bottom, get it clean, then get to the top and dribble on the clean wall. I can't bear to go back and re-do an area I have already done. So I start at the top and recommend that you do the same.

How large an area you work on at one time depends of course, on (1) your reach; (2) how dirty the surface is; and (3) how fast the solution will dry on the surface. A three by three foot section is just about right for the average person. Quickly cover the whole area with the solution on the sponge. Do not press hard or water will spurt out and drip on the carpet and your head, and run down your arms. Gently spread the liquid on the surface. By the time you get to the end of the patch of wall you're working on, the initial application of solution has worked the dirt loose. Now go back to the starting point and again go over the area gently. No squeezing. This time, the dirt should be loosened by the chemicals in your cleaning solution and it will come off and soak into the sponge. In the other hand, folded to perfection, is your cleaning cloth, with which quickly wipe and buff the area before it dries. No rinsing is necessary. The wiping will not only remove the remaining soap and dirt, but will polish off the scum that so often shows streaks on washed walls.

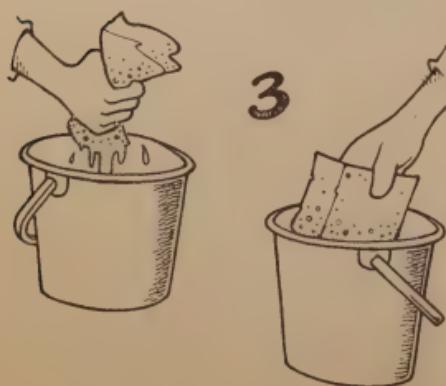
Now the critical procedure: hold the sponge over the empty bucket and *squeeze*, don't wring (you only wring your hands or a chicken neck). When you squeeze the sponge, the dirty solution will go into the empty bucket, leaving the sponge damp and clean. Again dip the sponge a quarter of an inch into the bucket of clean solution and repeat the process until the room is bright and



Dip your sponge a quarter of an inch into the cleaning solution. Wet an area about three feet square.



Wipe the sponged area with your folded cleaning cloth.



Squeeze the dirty sponge into an empty bucket. Dip it into the solution again and repeat. When you have finished, the empty bucket will be full of dirty water. And your cleaning solution will still be crystal clear — the chemical was working for you.



clean.

You'll notice the empty bucket beginning to fill with filthy black gunk and the cleaning solution is still crystal clear. That's because when you dip the wrung-out damp sponge each time, the solution soaks into the squeezed hungry sponge and the dirt never touches the solution. This means that every drop going on each new section of wall is powerful, unpolluted cleaning solution which is really doing most of the work. The old method you once used, scrubbing, dipping your sponge in the solution, wringing it, and scrubbing again, always left your cleaning water murky and filthy and thus without cleaning power. It would streak the walls and have to be changed every fifteen minutes, taking up a lot of time and wasting a lot of cleaning solution. With the two-bucket method you don't spend time scrubbing, just applying and removing. And the towel dries and polishes walls three times as well as the old rags you once used.

Another advantage to this method of cleaning is that you won't have to cover everything because there will be little or no dripping. (If you have a grand piano which a drop might hurt, don't take the chance: throw a light sheet of plastic over it.) Upholstered furniture can usually be moved out of the way rather than covered. A drop of ammonia solution won't hurt anything if it's removed immediately. If it's not, it may spot or ruin the finish.

Besides doing a seventy per cent faster and better job with this two-bucket technique, there are two more great 'Life After Housework' savers:

1. You will never empty and refill another bucket of solution. One healthy bucket of water and 10p of solution will

do your whole house.

2. The dirty water . . . you will love it. In fact you will have a special relationship with it. Before, all your evidence of toil and accomplishment went down the drain; now you have it to show. I've seen women save it for days. (Bottle it and place it on the mantel piece. I guarantee it will be the best, most heartwarming exhibit in your housekeeping museum.)

Outside walls (the inside surface of exterior walls) will be dirtier than inside or partition walls, so don't be surprised. If you can't see where you're going when you wash, forget it — it doesn't need washing. When you run into marks and spots on the walls that do not come clean when you wash them, just leave them until you have finished. Then come back and try first to remove them by rubbing hard with a cleaning cloth and a little solution. Toothpaste, peanut butter, or abrasive cleansers will always get them, but they will also take off the paint or kill the sheen on the wall. Don't clean the spots before you wash the whole wall down — they might come off with the first washing. *Let the solution do the work.* Most marks on walls can be removed simply by finding the same based cleaning agent. On a tar spot, for example, you can scrub and rub with high-powered cleaners, sweat and swear and not get the spot; a little solvent-based turpentine or paint thinner will remove it in three seconds and not hurt the wall. Use your head, not your hands. With this method, you won't scour the paint off or streak the surfaces.

Gloss walls

When cleaning gloss or egg-shell painted bathrooms, halls or kitchen areas, use the same procedure, with one

simple adjustment: keep the drying towels cleaner and drier, because gloss needs more polishing and a drier surface than emulsion paint. Wipe marks will not show on flat paints, but they will show even on perfectly clean gloss. Those circular wipe marks that you can't see when you finish (but see later on, from certain angles) are caused by rags; rags can't/won't buff your walls dry. I was called back on many jobs during my first year of cleaning to remove streaks that weren't there when I left. Since the day fifteen years ago when I began to use towelling cleaning cloths I haven't been called back for a case of streak on a single job.

Cleaning woodwork

You can wash the woodwork or skirting boards while doing the walls, but I seldom do. Because woodwork is covered with lint, hair etc., that will get into your sponge and be difficult to get out. Wait until you are finished washing the room and you have a damp cloth remaining from the wall washing. Then wipe the

Don't slosh on the solution. You'll be shocked what too much will do for you.



skirting board with it, cleaning it and picking up all the residue, then use your sponge and a fresh cleaning towel to finish it off, if need be, mark- and lint-free.

How to clean panelling

On panelling, use only mild vegetable oil, soap or neutral cleaner, and apply it sparingly with a sponge. Then dry-buff it with a cleaning cloth, with the grain. If you dry it with the grain, occasional streaks will never be noticed. A clean, dry surface on a panelled wall is much better than covering the panelling with 'El Gunko', panel polish and cleaners which leave a sticky surface to collect and hold finger prints and every passing particle of dirt and dust. Remember that raw wood and other unfinished panelling must be coated with a finish so moisture won't penetrate the wood. Then you'll be cleaning on a finish, not the wood surface — it's faster, and much easier on the wood.

Cleaning ceilings

Ceilings are always difficult to clean even when they are easy (shiny gloss, no texture or special finish of any kind). There is some good news and bad news for you ladies who for years have had aching arms and back and neck from working above your head. The bad news first: a physiologist told me that the muscle structure of a woman's torso is built to transfer the weight of a child carried while pregnant to the shoulders. Hence when a woman works above her head she is pulling *against* these muscles and finds it much more difficult than a man does. The good news is: what an excuse to get your husband to do the high work (such as ceilings).



About eighty per cent of your ceilings don't need washing (ceiling washing is tough even for experienced experts). Use a dry sponge, and if a few specks remain, dip a Q-tip in white shoe polish and mask them. If a ceiling, due to its texture, cigarette smoke stains, tube light marks, tough water leak stains (common in caravans), etc., poses a major cleaning chore, roll a coat of paint on. Ceilings are easier and faster areas to paint than to wash. If you try to wash (doing it Aslett style) and you get streaks or lap-over lines, don't walk your new plank — it probably isn't your fault.

It is common for the builder to leave bare texture unpainted in a new home. When in five to seven years the ceiling needs cleaning, it can't be washed because the texture will dissolve when water touches it. So one coat of emulsion paint should be rolled on, which fills the texture and leaves the ceiling fantastic. Five years later when you try to wash it (especially where the roller lines lap over), the moisture sinks in and brown streaks will appear. So always paint two

coats on an unpainted ceiling and it will be sealed enough to clean.

Take down the light fixtures first and pour cleaning solution on them and let them wait while you clean the room. This keeps you from cutting your arms on them as you are cleaning the ceiling. After you finish the room, use a cleaning cloth to wipe the loosened film and dirt from the fixture. Rinse with hot water, dry, and put back up immediately.

Acoustic tile ceilings generally won't show dirt until it is too late to clean them. Clean annually with a dry sponge. If you fail to properly care for an acoustic tile ceiling, you'll have no choice but to paint it. That ruins the looks and the acoustics.

Washing cupboards: I'd wash the inside of the cupboards once every twenty years or so. They generally take longer than the whole room, and nobody ever sees them anyway.

Don't forget the doors

There is an old business rule somebody installed as a proverb which in essence says twenty per cent of the workers do eighty per cent of the work. Eighty per cent of our time is spent on twenty per cent of our problems. It is called the Law of Eighty-twenty and in one instance in the house holds true.

Our doors get eighty per cent more use than any part of the house, yet we spend far less than twenty per cent of our chore time keeping them clean and looking bright. Doors are so taken for granted we seldom appreciate their contribution to a neat, attractive house. I once gave my wife a rest and got the house in top shape. When I had finished my cleaning marathon, for some reason the house still looked unfinished. When I looked every-

thing over, I found the floor glistening, the walls clean, no dust anywhere – but the *doors* had marks from hands, scratches from carrying groceries and suitcases through and knocking against them, the bottoms had black marks from kicks, mop and vacuum bumps, etc. Most of my doors are natural wood with clear finish. Some are painted. The painted doors were cleaned with Scotch-brite delicate-surface sponge. If marks and nicks were present or the doors were dull, I simply repainted them. The natural wood I scrubbed with a good ammonia solution and a nylon pad. I cleaned with the grain of the wood and rinsed the door. It was now clean, but a little dull. I made sure it was dry and with some extra-fine sandpaper, I again went over the door, lightly, with the grain. The sanding removed lint, dust, and hair particles that were in the previous coat of finish. I took a cloth dampened with petroleum spirits, (paint thinner works, too) and wiped the door to

get off every speck of lint and dust. By the way, I left the doors on while doing all this and put cardboard under them to protect the carpet/floor. I applied a coat of low-gloss varnish to each door (even the tops), rolling it on so it was evenly distributed and then brushing with the grain. This prevents runs and misses. Let them dry. If you use the right material, it will dry in only three or four hours. This is a fast and simple job to do. You won't believe the difference it will make in your doors' appearance and the ease of keeping them clean. It will take just a few hours and will help preserve and protect the doors from future abuse. Pick a day when the house is quiet – signs and warnings about keeping out of varnish aren't heeded. Do it on a dry summer day and the drying time will go fast. On a rainy day it can take fifty per cent longer to dry. As soon as your bedroom door is dry enough to close, take a rest. You deserve it for all the time and money you have saved.



Painting without fainting



The construction company has just finished Betty Betterhouse's new home. Painting is all that is left to do before she can move in. The construction foreman put a beautiful texture on the living room ceiling, some gorgeous unfinished wood panelling downstairs, and some fine decorative breeze block work in the basement games room. Not wanting to cover these natural surfaces, which were indeed beautiful, Betty asks the painters not to touch the living room ceiling. She asks them to leave the wood panelling natural, and two light coats of paint are applied to the masonry wall in the basement games room.

Betty moves in, and for two years she enjoys keeping it neat and clean. Gradually, she becomes frustrated with three areas in her house: the living room ceiling, the wood panelling, and the masonry wall. Some flyspecks, a fizzy soft drink tin and moving a neon tube light have left their marks on the pretty white textured ceiling. When Betty mixes some cleaning

solution and tries to remove the blemishes, she is horrified at the result. When the liquid hits the ceiling, the texture dissolves and comes off. Although the texture had seemed to be as hard as concrete or plaster, it wasn't. The texture was composed of the type of compound which, although it hardens, will soften again when it is wet. Betty touches up the marks with a little white shoe polish, but eventually she has only one alternative and that is to paint the ceiling.

One coat of an off-white paint covers the ceiling and it looks great, but its cleanability is still doubtful. One coat of paint is enough to prevent the texture from *dissolving* when it is washed, but streaks or lines will probably occur because some moisture will penetrate the paint and react with the texture. Betty really should give the ceiling two or more coats of paint in order for it to be cleanable in the future.

Betty greatly enjoys her natural wood because of its homeliness and warm

appearance. One afternoon, Betty's children get into the Crayons and a generous percentage of the mess that's distributed throughout the house ends up on the wood wall. It penetrates into the wood, and no matter how she scrubs or what formula she tries, the spots and marks remain visible.

Betty should have painted the wood with a low-lustre velvet clear varnish. This would have penetrated the wood and formed a membrane or protective shield. The shield would keep grease stains and other foreign marks from soaking into the wood's surface. A flat or satin finish varnish will dry with a low shine and the natural look of wood is preserved.

The masonry breeze block walls in the basement receive their share of the recreation room residue and need to be cleaned. When Betty tries to wash the painted blocks, she finds it almost impossible to get the dirt out of the pits and joints common in masonry construction. Betty should stop washing and apply another two coats of heavy gloss paint. This extra paint will fill the remaining rough spots in the wall and will make a good washable surface for the future.

The partnership of painting and cleaning can be an important housecleaning ally. I was a licensed paint contractor for several years and am convinced that a little painting wisdom can save you a considerable amount of cleaning woes and hundreds of hours of cleaning time. Books of clever quick painting tips have been peddled for years, but haven't convinced many homemakers that the task of redecorating a home, inside or out, is easy and fun. Painting is generally considered a dreaded necessity. Painting can,



however, be a rewarding physical and emotional experience for you if you make it easy.

Almost anyone can be a good painter. The basic cause of the despair and discouragement suffered by the home painter is that by the time you get fairly proficient in the task, it ends. It is three or four years before you pick up the paint brush and start the learning process all over again. If you would keep it up for a few weeks longer you would conquer most of the problem areas and enjoy it. Don't fall for gimmicks, miracle tools or do-it-yourself paint. Brushes, rollers, and spray guns can do it all, and in the long run, they are easier once you learn how to use them.

Summing up all painting wisdom in one volume is unimaginable, and doing it in one chapter of a housecleaning book is not possible, so I resort to some brief instructions.

Prepare before you paint

Efficient painting begins before you paint; preparing yourself, your furnishings, and the painting surface. The fol-

lowing suggestions will benefit all three of you. The mental anguish of mess and smell is what most people dread in painting. Minimize it.

1. *Clean.* If walls are very greasy or dirty, you should clean them prior to painting, using a good strong solution that will quickly remove the dirt (don't worry about hurting the surface). Here is a place where seventy per cent of the time the dry sponge is a lifesaver. You can dry-sponge a bedroom down in minutes, then paint it. For other surfaces and problems, ask at your paint store – such service is part of the paint price. A rented pressure washer can have the exterior of a dirty house ready to go in hours.

2. *Prepare.* Use prepared Polyfilla to patch holes. Let it dry. This will prevent dull spots in your paint job. As for nicks, bare wood, etc., always follow directions on the paint can. Use primer and *then* paint when surfaces require preconditioning – don't just use two coats of paint. A coat of primer undercoating is much better than a coat of paint as an undercoat.

3. *Protect.* Tramping through sheets of newspaper, half of them stuck to your feet with paint drops, while trying to untangle flimsy plastic sheets for your furniture will remove any doubts in your mind as to why Hitler was a painter and wallpaperer. Use old sheets to cover your furnishings and canvas dustsheets for floors. They're not expensive, will last for years, and you will find many other uses for them.

4. *Ventilate.* For some reason most people think that heat is what's needed to dry

things. Wrong. It's air circulation that does most of the drying. Even cool air circulating freely will dry paint faster than a sealed house with the heat up to eighty degrees. Breathing paint fumes reduces your physical efficiency and produces mental discouragement. Get plenty of air flow – it helps you and the paint.

Use the right paint. By using a top grade washable paint, you can paint less. Finger marks, food or splashes, hair oil, etc., penetrate into emulsion paint and generally cannot be removed. Use gloss paint for more efficient cleaning. Buy well-known high quality brands. The extra couple of pounds spent on a gallon of paint is one of the best cleaning investments you will ever make.

Select a reasonable colour. Use as much of the same colour throughout your home as possible. Too many homes look like a circus wagon because people are still trying to 'decorate' their homes with paint. The colour and style of modern furniture, curtains and carpets do a fine job of giving a home richness and taste. Using a soft off white shade on all the walls, ceilings, and woodwork will allow your furnishings to flatter your home and will simplify your painting because it won't go out of fashion. (And all your touch-up paint will be in one can.)

Choosing the room colour from a colour sample has caused many a nervous collapse after the paint is on. Paint is always darker and brighter than you expected or wanted. When you get the shade and colour you think you want, move about two shades lighter on the colour chart. You'll probably be much happier with the results.

Buy professional equipment and take care of it. A deeper roller pan or bucket with screen will boost efficiency and lessen the possibility of spills. Good brushes and a heavy-duty roller will also cover better, apply faster and more evenly. Learn to use roller extension handles. They work beautifully with professional tools and a two-foot effort with your arms will project a six-foot effort on the painting surface. Again, they will be awkward at first, but they are faster than holding a roller frame in your hand. They also help you to stand back from your work so you can see what you are doing.

Use your stepladder, ordinary ladder, or plank and box. They will make your painting task a lot easier.

Some tips on technique

- Prevent drips. When you first open the paint can, use a screwdriver or nail and punch several holes inside the lid groove. All the excess paint that used to run down the side will run back into the can and when the lid goes on, it will seal tight without squirting paint all over the side or all over you.

- Thinning doesn't hurt paint. Getting paint to a flowing consistency will create a brushed or rolled surface as smooth as silk. Use a recommended thinner and spirits, not petrol or other substitutes. Letting paint run off a dipped paint stirring stick is a good way to judge consistency. If gloss runs to a point two inches below the stick, it is just right. Solvent evaporation causes many gloss paints to get thick when stored or while in use. Thin it down. Some paint will appear too thin already. Insufficient stirring is the most probable cause of thin paint – the

heavy pigments are likely to have settled on the bottom. Always ask the paint store to shake the can on their machine. It is much easier and safer – the lid could come off while you are shaking it. There is a tendency not to stir varnish enough. Because it is clear, it looks mixed and fools the user. Varnish driers settle on the bottom, and if not stirred well, varnish will take forever to dry.

- Most people paint too much. When you paint too much, the sharp, crisp, trim edges and corners become so lumpy they make the house look cheap and sloppy. Any chips in the surface, which happen in even the best kept homes, are deep and ugly and almost impossible to blend in when the base is over-painted.
- Always drag the last stroke of the brush *into* the finished area. Don't pull it away. If you brush into the finished area, there won't be a brush mark.
- Even though you have rolled over a surface once and it appears covered, it isn't. Cross over it more than once. The first roller pass appears adequate, but small pinholes or air holes are there that will not show until the paint is dry.

Cleaning up

The most dreaded part of painting won't be a chore at all if you always scrape the paint out of the roller before you try to wash or clean it out. Use a paint stick or putty knife to do this messy job. Some rollers can hold about a cup of paint, and leaving it in results in a waste of paint, solvent, and cleaning time. If you don't scrape it, you can wash it with soap, squeeze it, and never seem to get anywhere – paint will come out of rollers

forever. If you've scraped it properly, you can clean a roller in minutes with a small amount of thinner. Once the roller is scraped dry, place it in a pan of thinner to loosen the remaining paint. Don't waste your time squeezing and massaging with your hands. Just spin the roller vigorously on a pole, post (or your arm, if you're desperate). Centrifugal force will throw the moisture effectively out of the nap. If any of it gets on you, it wipes off easier than labouring on a roller for ten minutes in a pan full of thinner.

Get all the paint out of the brush and dip it in the brush cleaner or solvent and swish it around to release (dissolve) the paint on the bristles. Again, a quick spin between your palms will accomplish more than ten minutes of sloshing. A little vegetable oil on the brush will preserve and soften it for future use. When finished, seal the brush in aluminium foil.

Always keep leftover paint for touching-up. Seal it well, and label it accordingly. Small baby food bottles make excellent touching-up containers.

Wallpaper removal

In the first fifteen years of my cleaning contracting, I did an enormous amount of wallpaper removing. You might like to know in a few sentences what it took me fifteen years to learn.

If you can avoid removing wallpaper,

make every effort to do so. But if you can't then I would recommend the following: first, you'll waste your time and money getting steamers, magic wallpaper dissolvers, boards with nails in them, and other gimmickry. I've stewed and sweated with all of them for hours, thinking something must be wrong with me, because the steamers were worn out by previous users. (Little did I know that all of them had had the same results and the same paranoid feeling about their efforts.) With all of their magic, and five helpers, the lady of the house and I would end up with putty chisels or knives, picking, gouging and scraping off scraps of wallpaper.

The best thing to do is to get a bucket of warm water, a big sponge, and a scaffold. Set up your plank so that you can get at the surface you want removed. Then wet down one end of the area as heavily as possible (just so it doesn't run down the wall too much). Cover the entire area, then go back and start over again, again and again. It really isn't much work, and is rather boring, but keep wetting it. After about thirty minutes of wetting, check a place or two. If it is quite loose, pull the paper off; if not, keep wetting. Don't get anxious. If you wet it enough, the stuff will come off in a big sheet. Then wipe the soggy glue off the wall so it will be in good shape. If wallpaper has ten coats of paint over it . . . panel the wall or move.

Shorter visits to the loo

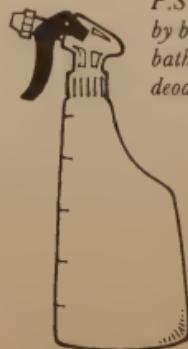
The toilets in the commercial building were a sight to behold. A line of sinks stretched to infinity and the toilet stalls looked like the Epsom starting gate. This huge toilet was used by two hundred and fifty people, and it just radiated cleanliness. The chrome glistened, and the white porcelain of the sinks and toilets sparkled germ-free. All toilet paper and hand-towel dispensers were filled. And the cleaning lady only spent an hour per day to keep it that way.

Clean your bathroom in 3½ minutes

Considering the average home's size and use, and that lady's finishing time, you should be able to keep your bathroom in that same immaculate condition in three and half minutes per day. Sound impossible? Not if you follow some professional techniques. The commercial approach to cleaning your bathroom is simple and will save you time, the secret, of course, being to keep it clean a few



Use germicidal or disinfectant cleaners



Dilute into a plastic trigger spray bottle.



Spray on and wipe (polish) dry.

P.S. Odours are caused by bacteria. A clean bathroom doesn't need deodorant.

minutes a day rather than in a big once-a-week clean-and-scrub siege. The preventive cleaning approach here is the wisest.

Tools and supplies again are an important factor. You'll have to bite your lip and disregard most of the old standbys like abrasive cleansers, powerful acid germ killers, bleaches, deodorant sprays, magic toilet splices, perfumed blocks, and blue flusher blocks. If you maintain your bathroom regularly and efficiently, you'll seldom need to use any of these.

Make sure that you clean all surfaces.



Essential supplies

For annual removal of hard-water or mineral buildup, the old cleanser or chemical solvent has its use, even by the professional. The best procedure to follow, however, is a regular cleaning programme that eliminates the need for abrasive cleansers and acids.

To avoid wasted time, damage to fixtures, and poor-quality results, you should go to the local janitorial supply house and purchase scented or unscented *disinfectant cleaner concentrate* — it's what hospitals use. This liquid, if diluted according to the directions on the bottle and used correctly, will clean quickly and efficiently, and eradicate or retard bacterial growth. This will eliminate smells and the need for the expensive perfumed preparations you have been using. Also buy one plastic spray bottle for each bathroom so the bottle can be left in the room.

Once the spray bottle is filled with the water and disinfectant cleaner in the correct proportion, the only other things you need are a *cleaning cloth or towel* and a two sided scouring sponge (Scotchbrite's delicate surface cleaner) for dislodging any per-

sistent residue. Spray and wipe the mirror if it's spotted. If not, leave it alone. Next, spray the hardware, sink, countertops (spray ahead so the cleaner will soften and break down dirt); wipe and buff the surfaces dry. They will sparkle with a glossy sheen. Do the shower and bath next. Do the toilet stool last, and be sure to clean the base of it. The reason for doing this is to avoid transporting the worst germ concentration to the taps and handles. Once the upper fixtures are clean, fall to your knees (one minute won't hurt you). Spray the floor and with the already damp towel cloth, wipe it up. This method is ten minutes faster and better than mixing up disinfectant mop water and fumbling around with a mop in a twenty-square-foot area.

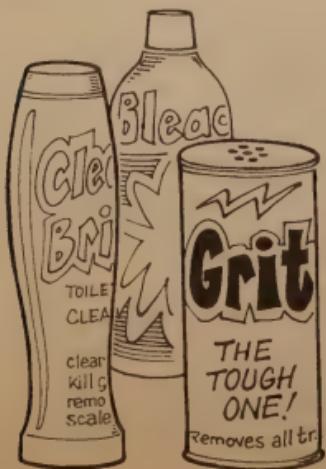
The benefits of preventive maintenance

It takes only minutes to clean a bathroom the spray-disinfectant way, and if a spray bottle and cloth are left in the

room, you can get your bathroom spotless while you are waiting for Junior to sit on the potty or for the bath to run. The system works only if you clean the bathroom regularly. This keeps hard-water deposits, soap scum, toilet lines, and other dirt from building up and cementing on. The basic reason you needed abrasive strong chemicals, cleansers and bleaches (and dynamite) to clean the bathroom in the past was that buildup accumulated to the point of no return and had to be ground off instead of wiped off.

Observing the many hundreds of houses I've cleaned in my career, more than fifty per cent of the bathrooms (baths, sinks and shower units, etc.) have had damage from improper use of acids, cleaners, and abrasive pads. This is a good reason to use the disinfectant cleaner/spray bottle system from the start. Your chrome, plastic, fibreglass, marble, etc., will remain bright and sound. If you have damaged fixtures,

Minimize the use of:



you will have some difficulty using anything because porous surfaces collect dirt quickly and clean slowly. Many of these surfaces – especially the shower area – will benefit from a coat of paste wax, which helps repel the yuk and hard-water buildup. After attending my seminars, many people minimize the problem of shower buildup by simply hanging a ten- or twelve-inch squeegee in the shower. It takes only fifteen seconds for the user to leave the wall dry and clean after a shower. (Besides, squeegeeing in the nude is a unique experience!)

Be careful what you soak in baths and sinks overnight. Extended exposure to some normally harmless cleaners will often pit the surface.

Cleaning toilets

Briskly scrubbing inside a toilet bowl with a toilet brush daily for a few seconds will retard deposits and remove discoloration and lines. If you need to remove old encrustation in the toilet, do it the right way. Do not pour trade chemical cleaner into the water-filled bowl and slosh it around. Dilution with water neutralizes the power of any toilet cleaner. Instead grasp a swab (see equipment chart, page 21) and push it quickly up and down in the bowl towards the bottom. All the water will vanish and leave a bare bowl. Then give the swab a light application of cleaner and coat the inside of the toilet bowl. Flush to rinse. If a ring remains, don't get excited and drown the whole unit. The ring is the result of hard-water deposit that's left as water in the toilet evaporates. A pumice stone or even a little wet-dry sandpaper will remove almost any ring. Remember to brush the bowl once in a while to prevent buildup. And bear in mind that



DON'T pour.



DO force water out.



*Then . . . lightly coat
the bowl. Then flush
and rinse.*

bleach is not a good cleaning compound. It is an aggressive oxidizing agent. It appears to clean things, but this appearance is often deceptive. The oxidizing or whitening of stains, toilet rings, rust stains, etc., generally doesn't remove them, but only bleaches or camouflages them. Bleach will eventually break down chrome and Formica and other plastic laminates. Keep it out of your bathroom!

Toilet-tank capsules that turn the water blue don't do much for maintaining toilets, since many of them are only coloured bleaching agents. Their greatest value is psychological. If you practise good cleaning habits in the bathroom, you won't need them.

How to get rid of mildew

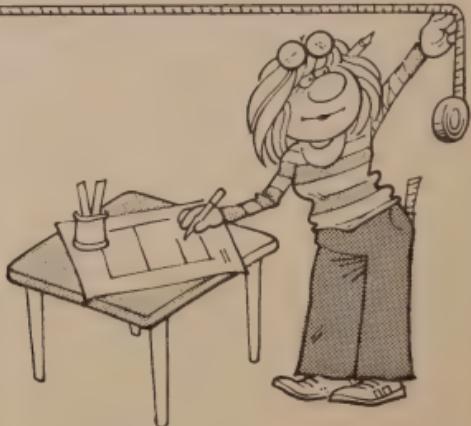
When warm, humid weather and spores of mould team up, mildew can grow on everything, including drawers, cupboards, boots and shoes. For the first twenty years of my life, I thought mildew was something that appeared on roses and lupins. Since entering the cleaning business, I've been bombarded with the mildew question: 'How do we get rid of it?' The best way to get rid of it is to prevent it. (Another inducement to fol-

low the advice in chapter 4 – who wants seventy per cent mildewed junk?) Keeping kitchen grease, grime and other foreign substances cleaned up removes the growth bed for mildew. Using disinfectant in the bathroom and shower areas discourages its growth there. Keep the house clean, well-ventilated and as dry as possible. Use silica gel if necessary (order it from Boots) to retard mildew. Bleach 'kills' mildew, but won't prevent it from returning.

Doorknobs and handbags

One of the most unsanitary items in the home is the doorknob. It wouldn't hurt, while armed with a spray bottle of disinfectant cleaner, to go through the house and spray and wipe all the door-knobs occasionally. Another unsanitary carry-over from toilets that all women should be aware of is the shopping bag or handbag. Handbags are often placed on dining tables (right where your salad fork is) after having been dumped on the floor next to the loo in a public toilet. Avoid this unappetizing practice. Put your bag next to your chair – and use the shelves or hooks provided in public toilets, when available.

Efficiency -your way



I am a firm believer in personal inspiration and revelation, and I am convinced that women are brighter, and more ingenious than men. Most of the time *you* can work things out better and quicker than 'Dr Home Advice' can in his column or book. When you meet a problem that is unique to you, nothing is more rewarding than using your own ability to zero in on it and solve it. You say you hate to paint the inside of the cupboards? Pick up your big furry cat and the neighbour's shaggy dog, dip them in the roller paint, throw them both inside the cupboard and close the door. All you'll have to do is touch up a bit and give the animals a bath in turpentine.

This is a far-fetched example, but what I'm trying to say is that nothing is impossible. Don't think negatively – and don't restrict your thinking when you're trying to solve a problem. Your personal

ingenuity is limitless. Everyone reading this book has had from one to a hundred ideas that she was going to build into her dream home to save housework. Most of these ideas were brilliant in concept, workable, economical, practical and capable of saving millions of hours of household toil. It is sad, however, that coming from the best source in the world, the homemaker, not even a minute percentage of these ideas have been developed. The excitement of that special timesaving idea was lost in the hassle of satisfying planning restrictions, Parker Morris Standards and other red tape. Thus people end up taking what they can get – a plain old house crowded with things that require maintenance time the rest of their lives. Most home owners are still hoping that some brilliant, resourceful, pioneering young architect will major in designing chore-

free homes and liberate us all with one grand swoop of the drafting pen. Well, so far it hasn't happened, and you can rest assured that it won't happen . . . at least not in that way. The *homemaker* is the source of power in such a revolution. Will she respond? I hope so.

Again it all boils down to how valuable your time is. Work can be lessened, and time saved, by good maintenance planning and decorating. For example, bathrooms bedecked with velvet toilet covers, deep-pile carpets, and a couple of your favourite oil paintings will be a drain to maintain unless you have limitless hours to clean. A bathroom is no place for elaborate bookcases, statues, or other unmaintainable furniture and fixtures. Keep in mind the following:

1. Will it clean?
2. Will it last?
3. Is it usable?

If you weigh these items carefully, it might save you a lot of hours cleaning handcarved toilet seats.

Designing to keep work out of your home is unquestionably the best approach to household freedom. Everyone living in a house or desiring to build a new one, or buy an old one, can invent, manufacture, and install in her home anything she wants. If your time is constantly used up running outside your rambling farmhouse trying to locate or keep an eye on your children, go to an army surplus store and pick up a used submarine periscope and mount it in your kitchen instead of running in and out all the time. Just say, 'Up scope' and scan the yard, never leaving the house. Ridiculous? Not so, if it works — and suits your needs.



Be bold enough to think up and design your own labour saving plans and devices.

If you hate to move and dust furniture and want to have groups of people in your home on special occasions, dig a pit for a sunken front room and build in stationary padded furniture. I told you earlier how we did it: it sat up to forty and there wasn't a stick of furniture to clean. If you've got husky boys who are going to fight and wrestle, build their chest-of-drawers into a stagecoach between two built-to-the-floor beds. Carpet the top of the chest-of-drawers so they can play cowboys and roll down onto the bed. It will save a torn-up room and cleaning time, and besides, it'll be great sport for the boys. When they grow up and begin to act like humans, get them human beds. If you don't like to wash and paint walls, carpet them — they'll be a dream to maintain.

If you are a short or tall family hang your clothes cupboard rails, toilet roll holders, doorknobs, and mirrors where you don't have to tiptoe or stoop to navigate through the house. If you run your home like a garage, then put a drain in the centre of the floor.

Some time-robbers to avoid

- *Indented or embossed tile or linoleum.* It looks great, but recessed surfaces collect dirt, are hard to sweep, and will gradually fill with wax.
- *Indoor-outdoor carpet.* It shows everything. It's difficult to clean and adds absolutely nothing to the feel of a home.
- *Highly textured walls and ceilings.* They hold dirt and are a spider's paradise. They're hard to clean and paint.
- *Unfinished wood.* Looks nice and rustic, but once it's dirty you've had it. Wood should always be sealed and finished.
- *Fancy engraved hardware.* This takes time to keep up and provides a breeding ground for creepy crawlies.
- *Extremely high ceilings.* Although it is impressive and prestigious to have a couple of twenty five to thirty foot ceilings in your house, they are hard to maintain and energy-wasteful.
- *Multi-surface furniture and fixtures.* Every surface needs maintenance — the fewer the better. A louvred door, for example, has much more surface than a simple, smooth door.
- *Dark colours* (furniture, floors, work tops) require more daily upkeep than medium-coloured items (dark colours show dust and spots — *everything!*).
- *Decoration clusters.* One big nice picture sure beats a dusty clump of forty little ones (and cheats spiders out of cosy homes).
- *Free-standing appliances* — (washing machines, tumble dryers, ovens, stoves, refrigerators, dishwashers). They have five sides to keep clean (most built-ins have one or two).
- *Carpet in high-risk areas.* It takes ten minutes to clean up your jam sandwich from a carpeted kitchen floor, but only ten seconds from a hard-surface floor.
- Avoid windows in areas where you don't really need them. A window, because it's a light source, draws everything from flies to kids to animals to moisture. And windows require net, blinds and curtains. Window areas are high maintenance areas — you'll spend much more time cleaning a windowed area than you will on an equivalent stretch of wall.

You could continue this list for hours. Do so before you build or take over another house. Once you arrive at a timesaving idea and are sure that you want it, *do it*, not bullying your way, but checking and working it out with the builder, engineer, architect or whoever is in charge. Remember, most people are chickenhearted when it comes to departing from the beaten track, and that includes many professional people. On the other hand, a little timely professional advice may keep you out of trouble. For example, I designed all of the lights in our home to be wall-mounted six and a half feet from the floor. The purpose was to eliminate ladders and reduce physical damage to the house and safety risks in light bulb changing. It was a great plan. I picked out some handsome, expensive, frosted hexagon fixtures and mounted them. We couldn't see a thing. Wall

lights, especially the frosted ones, are not designed to shed light. I now have ninety individual light fixtures in my home and still can't see much without a candle or a miner's hat. A few minutes of professional advice would have shown me how to save forty of those light fixtures (and some expensive energy payments) and still get adequate light.

Good design means wise selection of paint, wall coverings, and carpets. Design, fix up, or rebuild according to your lifestyle, and you won't regret it. Here is a test list you might review for your house. You can come up with the details to fit your taste and energy level if you'll apply these maintenance-minded criteria:

Ease of maintenance. Once a surface is subjected to use, it will become dirty, worn and dusty. A surface should be

economically cleanable (from both a time and money standpoint).

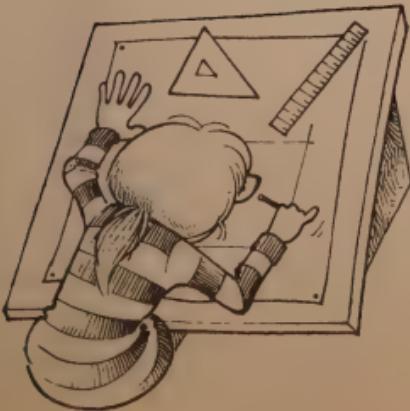
Accessibility. All surfaces, appliances and decorations must be located for easy access. 'Under', 'above' and 'behind' must be eliminated.

Replaceability. Ruined or worn areas or items some day have to be replaced. Choosing standard sizes and styles will make this a lot easier.

Durability. Materials or structures must be able to resist wear from natural or human abuse.

Serviceability. Is manpower or equipment conveniently available to clean or repair the item?

Safety. Is it safe?



Why not be a professional?



Can you picture yourself next Monday morning? It's 9.00. All of your housework is done. Your home is organised, and you are leaving it to go and clean four other homes... for £5 an hour! No, it isn't a fantasy or a joke.

One of the biggest economic and social realities of the '80s is the two-career family. The effects of an extra job on family and marriage relationships can be problematical. But that doesn't eliminate many families' growing need for a second income. Homemakers with twelve children or no children have flocked to the job market in an attempt to meet ever-mounting inflation. In order to secure

employment, most have found it necessary to purchase extra transport, accept close to minimum-wage jobs, hire expensive child care services, and spend a lot of money on business clothes. Actual benefits from most homemakers' second jobs would be questionable if both direct and indirect costs were calculated properly. Why go through the expense of all these overheads to gain a tiny per cent of income when you can double your profit for half the emotional and physical price you are paying? Why not start your own professional cleaning business? It is not only possible, but will offer you some great personal and family advantages:

1. Excellent income: £5 to £10 per hour for your time.
2. Tax deductions and depreciation advantages.
3. The potential for family involvement.
4. The ability to work to your own timetable.
5. Rewarding social and educational experiences.
6. Regular physical exercise.
7. Equipment to do all your own house cleaning.
8. Opportunity to pick your own work colleagues.

Why get a job where you don't have time with your husband, or friends? Why have children you can't enjoy? Why fight traffic and parking and rigid hours every day? Why answer to bosses? Why tolerate excessive deductions from your cheque? Why realise only a small amount of clear money for forty hours of hard work? On your own terms and at your own energy level, in your own selected environment, you could make the same money in half the hours and feel better physically and emotionally.

The market for housework is wide open. There isn't a household in Britain that doesn't need housework done. The majority of struggling homemakers can't cope with their own housework, so that leaves the majority of your neighbourhood or town needing help. You can provide it. Good professional house-cleaning companies are almost non-existent. Being a woman, you have a number of advantages over a male to land a professional housecleaning job. Homemakers are extremely particular as to whom they turn loose in their house to clean, and you, another homemaker, will more easily win their trust. You'll love it, and it won't tax your own personal fam-

ily life like a full-time job would. The predominant fear most people have about trying their own business is, 'Can I get customers?' This will never be a problem if you do good quality work for an honest price. Even when I first started out, my success rate in getting the jobs that I quoted for was nine out of ten. Here are a few strategies which will help you.

Learn to quote for your work

The first step is to learn to quote for work. Never work by the hour. Everybody in the world thinks a 'cleaning lady' should get a pound or two an hour. If you quoted £3 an hour to wash someone's walls she would gasp unbelievingly at your nerve, even if you told her it would only take three hours (£9). However, if you said, as you wrote the price on your card and handed it to the homemaker, 'I have looked at your paintwork carefully and feel for labour, materials, and equipment, I can do them for £18,' she would nod gratefully. A set price is more acceptable than a per-hour rate for most homemakers.

The most asked question in the industry is 'How do I know how much to quote?' That's easy. Work out how long it will take you and multiply by what you want to make an hour. The better and faster you become, the more you have to charge. After a few months, you'll know your actual production time and will be able to estimate closely. You'll over- or under-estimate a few times (you might have to work free for a while) – and you'll learn from it. But once you get good, your confidence will wax strong, and you'll get almost every job for which you quote. This little table of costs will give you some guidance in getting started.

Price Estimate Guide

Walls and ceilings	per sq. ft.	small room	medium room	large room
Cleaning				
Hall	1½p	£3.50	£5.00	£6.00
Play room	1½p	£9.00	£12.50	£15.00
Living room	1½-2p	£9.00	£13.00	£18.00
Dining room	1½-2p	£6.00	£8.00	£9.00
Bedroom	1½-2p	£5.00	£7.50	£10.50
Entrance	2p	£2.50	£4.00	£6.50
Bathroom	2p	£2.50	£4.00	£6.00
Kitchen	2-2½p	£7.00	£12.50	£17.50
Stair landing	2½p	£6.00	£7.00	£10.00
Cellar	2½p	£5.00	£8.00	£10.00
Hard-surface floors		lightly soiled (per sq. ft.)	average (per sq. ft.)	filthy (per sq. ft.)
Clean		½p	1p	1½p
Clean and wax		1½p	2½p	3½p
Strip and wax		4p	5p	6p
Carpets				
Vacuum and spot-clean		½p	1p	1½p
Spin-surface		1½p	2p	4p
Shampoo (extract)		4p	5p	6p
Windows (both sides)				
Small, accessible		1½p	1½p	2p
Large, accessible		1p	1p	1½p
Small, inaccessible		2p	2p	2½p
Large, inaccessible		1½p	1½p	2p
Upholstery		lightly soiled (per item)	average (per item)	filthy (per item)
Small chair		£1.00	£1.50	£2.50
Large chair		£2.50	£3.50	£4.00
Small couch		£4.00	£5.00	£7.00
Large couch		£6.00	£7.50	£11.00
Furniture				
Clean and polish				
Small end table		50p	75p	£1.00
Average TV		£1.00	£1.25	£1.50
Piano		£2.00	£2.25	£2.75
Desks, chests of drawers		£1.75	£2.00	£2.50

(guide continues to next page)

Commercial Janitorial	small office	medium office	large office
Square feet price	2½-4p sq. ft./ per month	2½-3p sq. ft./ per month	2-2½p sq. ft./ per month
Total cleaning production per hour	light office 3000 sq. ft.	medium office 2800 sq. ft.	heavy office 2000 sq. ft.

(total square footage quotes are of area actually cleaned or serviced)

Other business operation costs:

Vehicle - charge 20p a mile

Overheads - add 5% to your total price to cover phone, advertising, etc.

Maid work per hour if requested - £3-£3.25 contract amount.

If someone wants to rent or borrow your equipment and supplies - don't let them. You'll lose at every turn. Instead, encourage them to buy or make their own. Very few people know how to take care of professional equipment and damaged or lost parts or attachments can cost you a month's profit.

Be extremely careful about bidding or giving prices over the phone, or in conversation. There can be a big difference in two bedrooms exactly the same size and the same age of home. Type of paint, condition, location, accessibility, the personalities of people you will be working for, and many other factors can create a pricing problem if you don't look over a job in person.

Remember, this table is only a guide. You'll be able to insert your own figures after a little experience. Who you work for as well as the quality of homes and furnishings you are working on will make a lot of difference in the amount of cleaning time required. Much depends on the area, size of rooms, type of paint on the wall (gloss or emulsion), who supplies the equipment, who gets the area ready, how far you have to travel, etc. You will have a few losses, but that will stimulate your desire to be more accurate and you'll improve.

Always quote for work. This is the basic formula of success in your own business. If your price is accepted and you work twice as hard, you can earn twice as much money by the hour.

Ordinary everyday housework type

services (sweeping, vacuuming, dusting, etc.) are always in demand. But almost anyone can do that kind of housework, at about the same rate of production and speed, and this holds the cost or worth of such jobs down. Try to specialize in the areas where the homemaker struggles: floors, walls, window washing, carpets, etc. Competence in these areas will lead you to other, and even more lucrative jobs.

Unless the customer demands it, or unless the job is very small, never mention a price at the time you go to look at a job. Leave the customer convinced that you are the best-qualified person to do the job and that she will be missing out if she doesn't have you in to do the work. (Brag about yourself.) Return home, prepare the quotation, and post it to the

customer. Handing the customer a price and standing and waiting for a decision creates an unpleasant atmosphere. Especially with large expenditures at stake, the customer likes to study the quotations and think it over before making a commitment. A commitment given in haste or under pressure often develops into a bad customer relationship and often affects the job and the promptness with which the bill will be paid.

The proper conversation while the job is being estimated can make a big difference. If you can see that money is a problem at the moment, and if you know that her credit is good, let a prospective customer know that you are agreeable to arranging suitable terms. (Compensate for this in the price.) Remember, some jobs you may consider small or common are important and expensive decisions for some customers. Take your time, examine the whole job, and add your personal touch to the negotiation. An unconcerned square-footage estimator divorces herself from this personal touch, which is one of the biggest factors in whether or not you get the job.

Helpful techniques in preparing a quotation

When preparing a quote, itemize and describe clearly the service you are going to provide. Descriptive words and specifics are much more effective than just stating the minimum of information. For example, here are two ways a job could be described in a quotation to paint a floor:

Example A. Painting porch floor, one coat grey enamel. £25.00

Example B. Preparation of complete rear porch floor area, including light sanding, renailing protruding nails, removing all dust and foreign material, and applying one coat of enamel in Dove Grey colour. Total cost. £22.25

Almost anyone would accept the second quotation rather than the first one because it appears that she is getting more for her money. Preparation simply means getting the area ready, and both prices include that. But example B tells the customer about it. 'Light sanding' means removing paint blisters or scaly areas, and 're-nailing protruding nails' may take three or four minutes. 'Removing all dust and foreign material' just means sweeping the floor. Example A didn't even bother to tell the customer that the floor would be swept. 'Applying' is a professional word; 'painting' sounds very amateurish. When listed on a quotation, professional-sounding words help sell the job.

For large or long-term jobs, your quote should be submitted with a one-page contract agreement form. (Most firms copy the details for this from other people's forms!) Once a relationship of trust is established, a contract may not be necessary on every job.

Getting started

If you just follow the directions in this book, you'll know more about house-cleaning than anyone you will ever work for. Every job will multiply your experience. You'll find with your skills you can consistently average £4 to £6 per hour. Sometimes you'll get as high as £12 per hour on special jobs.

The idea of getting started seems to cause even the most talented to shake in their boots. I know you can do it, and once you start, you'll look back, after the first three jobs, and laugh at yourself for being nervous about trying it. Visions of arming yourself with a mop bucket and dust sheet and parading up and down the streets beating on doors for business are out. You want to go to work, not gao! Here is a starting place.

1. Get a name and a slogan. Just think – a chance to name your own company! Avoid personal names like Mabel's Cleaning, Betty's Broom Service, Jones Cleaners. Instead, use names like Century, Belair (like car names) except relate it to homes. Such names have a ring of authority, and will inspire greater confidence. (Would you rather eat at Myrtle's Cafe or The Sea Galley?)

2. Have cards or leaflets printed. Always use a picture or visual symbol on your 'advertising' literature of any kind. A bit of creativity, some Letraset, and a little free help from the printer will give you an inexpensive but effective tool to attract business. Avoid cheap stencilled decorations. Be fresh and original.

Print two hundred to five hundred or more for the best cost savings. Use a small local printer.

3. Check the rules and regulations. Phone the local tax office. If you're just going to do an occasional job, with no employees, there will probably be no problem. But if you are going to operate on a large scale and hire a couple of neighbours and have a van, etc., it's best to inform the authorities involved. The staff at the Town Hall will direct you to the right place to find rules and regula-

tions, and the local Chamber of Commerce is usually very helpful. Explain your intention and regulatory agencies will generally send you everything you should know, free. They are fair, friendly, and will tell you exactly what is needed to operate a business. Don't be overawed by all of this. It is easy (a ten-year-old can handle reports), and the cost to you generally is little or nothing. 'Acting dumb' to see what might happen seldom pays.

Check with your insurance company. The 'personal liability' coverage you now have may also cover you and your little business, but check it out. Insurance companies don't cover workmen or workmanship, only liability. If you fall through a window or rip a couch while washing the ceiling, you are covered under the liability section. However, if you break the window or rip the couch while working on it, you are responsible. Do arm yourself with the necessary insurance, but don't get caught up in morbid fears of what might happen. You'll have a few bad experiences, but be careful and conscientious and your victims will have great compassion, unless you splash a big drop of ammonia in the eye of a Rembrandt!

4. Advertise. A business card pinned up in a laundrette or on a newsagent's board will never get you the kind of people you want to work for. If they can't afford or don't have a washing machine, they generally won't be needing or affording you. Classified ads in the newspaper are always good. Dropping cards off at local businesses gets both owners and clients. But the best advertising for housecleaning is unquestionably the personal recommendation. Women who have

their homes cleaned professionally love to brag about it, and if you do a good job, you'll never be able to handle the work that will flow in. A card or two left at a house or a business will quickly find its way into the hands of a friend, and you'll find your way into another assignment. If your work is good (even if it is a little expensive), your business will boom and prosper.

5. Start small, and test it out. You'll be surprised what happens. One thing it will do is make your own housework easier and simpler.

6. Some of the best sources for work (and reliable payment) are:

- Local personal residence cleaning.
- Smoke-loss cleaning jobs for insurance companies.
- Small medical or professional offices.
- Construction cleaning, such as in new housing developments. (Be sure to get your money quickly.)

7. Some accounts to avoid:

- People moving away.
- Shopping precincts and supermarkets.
- Maid work for finicky old ladies.



8. Hire cautiously. Wrapped up in the thrill and vanity of becoming a big boss, there is a tendency to promise every ambitious or down-and-out friend a job. Be careful. You could end up working for *them* at no pay. Once some of your friends, relatives or other job-needing associates go on a job with you, you will feel obligated to keep and use them on every job, even if they turn out to be worthless. You'll end up spending all of your time assigning, supervising, and cleaning up after them. Go slowly. Start with yourself and a reliable helper (an immediate family member), and work up from there.

9. Get your own equipment. You wouldn't be very impressed if a high-class restaurant asked you to bring your own dishes, or a surgeon asked you to furnish the scalpel. There is power and mystery in 'professional equipment and supplies.' They are dependable, deductible, and usable in your own home. Don't go over your head on expensive specialty items if your business doesn't justify it. The equipment list in chapter two should give you a good start. Put your name and emblem on all your equipment, for security and advertisement. You don't need a great deal of equipment, and you can store it in the garage and transport it in your car. If your business expands and you need a bigger vehicle, get a van. You don't need a fur-lined £8,000 van. An early model would be fine because you won't be driving it that much – maybe a couple of miles, and then it's parked for hours while you clean a house. There is no sense carrying the insurance, interest, and overhead on an expensive new one. You'll probably only put five thousand miles or less a year on the vehicle as most

JOB SHEET RECORD

Name _____ Tel: (Home) _____

Address _____ Tel: (Work) _____

Insurance Company _____ Tel: _____

Address _____

Work to be carried out on _____ 19_____ at a.m. p.m.

ROOM	CLEANING			PAINTING			CARPETS	MISCELLANEOUS		
	Wall	Ceil.	W.W.	Wall	Ceil.	W.W.		Windows	Floors	Amount
Living										
Dining										
Kitchen										
Hall										
Bedroom										
Bedroom										
Bedroom										
Landing										
Playroom										
Utility										
Bathroom										
Toilet										
Cellar										
1. All cleaning of walls - ceiling - woodwork	£						Cost £	Cost £	Cost £	Cost £
2. All cleaning of carpets and rugs	£									
3. All cleaning of floors and tiles	£						Upholstery			
4. All cleaning of contents - articles	£									
5. All cleaning of upholstery	£						Couch			
6. All cost of curtain-cleaning & hanging	£						Couch			
7. Cost of windows	£						Chair			
8. Cost of repair or replacement	£						Chair			
9. Total cost of painting	£						Chair			
10.	£									
11.	£									
TOTAL	£									

This proposal includes all costs of equipment, supplies, labour and other expenses needed to complete the job as outlined above. Any additional services performed over and above that which is outlined will be considered extra work and will result in additional cost. Your acceptance of this proposals as set forth herein will be indicated by your directing us to commence with the work described herein. We shall be paid the sum of £_____ for the work outlined herein. Work will be completed before any payment is made and work will be done wholly at our risk.

Authorized Signature _____

W-Wash D-Dry Sponge S-Shampoo SW-Scrub & Wax P-Paint

of your work will be close to you. Choose a white van or a bright colour and paint your sign on. It will be great advertising for you. Don't let your husband use it to go fishing or carry bricks in or let the teenagers use it for a joy ride. Have a few simple shelves built into it, and install curtains if there are any windows. The curtains will serve two purposes: they make the van look more homely, and they reduce temptation to thieves.

10. Involve the family. These days there aren't enough paper rounds or greengrocer jobs to go around. Once you get a client and she loves and trusts you, she will need other services such as painting, grass cutting and garden work. This is a natural for your children while you clean the house. And imagine your husband cleaning the fireplace or toilet bowl under your strict supervision. (It will probably never happen, but it's a great thought anyway.)

11. Fill your work list and timetable. Having a small housecleaning business is not going to give you an ulcer. Booking your own clients leaves you the master. You have the freedom to work just a couple of hours a week – or eighty if you have the energy. Every woman's family and social obligations are as unique as her physical stamina and emotional needs. If all your children are at school, then you will have three hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon. You could work all week or once a week. Many businesses like their cleaning work done between 4.00 and 6.00 a.m., and if you are a nervous-energy type like me, that is a good time. You are the captain of your own ship; you decide when, where and how. If you can't conform to a client's wishes, or bend enough to meet them, don't bother with them. They can get someone else. The reason you got into the business was to run it your way, not to let it run you.

There is life after housework



Well, that's it. We've covered enough aspects of housework to provide a fresher, more realistic view of the subject. And until a robot is developed that can be programmed to do your housework for you, you'll find the methods and equipment outlined in the foregoing seventeen chapters to be the next best thing for getting the most work done in the least amount of time.

Personal freedom is life's real reward. Housework is an important and worthy endeavour, but the less of your life it requires, the more will be available for the other pursuits that add dimension and joy and meaning to living. As I've already stated, housework may be your responsibility, but it is not your destiny. Your real role in the home goes far beyond housework.

What you used to see as the thankless chores of housework might well be some of your greatest teaching moments... time to help the family and yourself develop an improved attitude and new respect for this important aspect of living.

Think 'teaching moment' the next time... you spend four hours preparing a lovely family dinner and get only a three-foot stack of dirty dishes... your sixteen hours spent sewing a satin nativity play costume are rewarded with a whimper about the hemline... you proudly present a fat, tidy row of freshly ironed white shirts and he says 'Where's my blue one?'... you're on duty around the clock nursing the family through a siege of the 'flu, yet when it's your turn to collapse into a well-deserved sickbed,

there's not a soul around to nurse you . . . you know the kids are home by the trail of coats and books left in their wake . . . or by the jam and peanut butter and empty glasses covering the kitchen units.

Remember, if *you* don't teach them, who will?

Don't do your nut if you sometimes discover that even after applying all the best methods of housecleaning and management, you nevertheless experience some of the mundane realities of the profession. Every job has them, and housework is no exception. So brace yourself, and take it with a smile, for you too are vulnerable to slipping vacuum belts, flyspecked windows, blocked sink drains, sticky kitchen floors, ring around the collar, muddy boots, tidal wave of dirty laundry and five dozen buns to bake for the Spring Fair (with two hours' notice).

But you've made tremendous progress. You've learned the basic mechanics of effective housecleaning, and you've become more aware of the true nature of a homemaker's role. You've also seen the error of the truism that anything to do with cleaning and housework is unglamorous and unrewarding.

I've been exposed to the same image

you have of the unglamourous job of cleaning, and I am still confronted with it every day. As I mentioned earlier, I ran my business while going to university. I received several newspaper write-ups and a lot of publicity, and everyone accepted that my cleaning activities were great as well as being different — *as long as they were leading to something else*. When I finished my studies and still remained a cleaner, my social prestige diminished greatly. Several little things, most of them unquestionably humorous, brought this to my attention.

I was doing a special job in the bank, cleaning the vault floors with a buffer. Customers were still drifting in and out of the bank, casting pitying glances, as they usually do, at the cleaner. I was involved in community affairs, had five children, was a scout master, active churchman, went to symphony concerts and thought I was riding the tide of social prestige along with the rest of upstanding society. One of the bank's customers, an irritable lady, was dragging her loud and disobedient child along when suddenly in disgust she grabbed the little fellow, shook him violently, and, gesturing towards me, said, 'Behave, you little pest, or you'll end up just like him.'

As the days progressed, I found that her opinion of cleaning people was nearly universal. Whenever I'm mingling in a new group and my accomplishments are described, a newcomer will always ask, 'Well, what does he do for a living?' Every time there follows a hesitation and silence. Nobody wants to say, 'He's a cleaning man.' People who meet me on the street and remember me from the early days because of the publicity my housecleaning business received will inevitably ask, 'Well, how are you, Don?



What are you doing now? Are you still a...?' They always hesitate because they can't say 'housecleaner'.

While at university my daughter Laura ski'd at the nearby resorts whenever she and her friends had the chance. Since she was the one with the car that could hold the most skis and students, it was generally used as a taxi. After everyone was loaded in and they were off to the mountain, someone in all the jabbering would always comment, 'This is really a lovely car. What does your dad do for a living?' My daughter, who has enjoyed the status of cleaner since the age of twelve always answered cheerfully, 'He's a cleaner.' The interior of the car would go silent for approximately three minutes, no one knowing what to say. Finally, in a meek, polite voice someone would patronizingly say, 'That's nice.'

One of my managers was registering his wife at the hospital to have a baby. When the nurse asked the manager his occupation, he answered confidently, 'Cleaner.' She looked up at him and said shyly, 'Oh, come on now. You don't really want me to put that down, do you?'

I could relate dozens of such stories, all hinging on the questionable status of being a 'cleaning person.' The image and status that society associates with cleaning – in business or the home – is totally incorrect. I recently held my travelling housecleaning seminar for a dental group. When someone asked how toilet cleaning related to dentists, I informed them, 'We both work in enamel don't we?' Voting in a council meeting is no more important than cleaning a bedroom. A glittering restaurant has no more vital things taking place in it than your ordinary, everyday kitchen. Those

who have immersed themselves in the business enjoy it – find it an exhilarating life. The home is the most sacred and exciting place on the face of the earth. And *you* control it and have the responsibility of keeping it in order.

Women are forever targets for the misguided notion that in order to build up the image and credibility of women in the business world, the work and image of women in the home must be discredited and destroyed. Don't you believe it! For a woman to pronounce that caring for her own home is a hardship, a drag, and a bore is only to admit a lack of imagination and creativity. Those who clean and care for a house, whether on a full-time basis or in addition to another career, can often enjoy it tremendously.

Houses are more than showcases and status symbols. Your house is your home – the background against which your life is lived. Why direct all your efforts towards impressing society? There's fun and great satisfaction in the giving of yourself to your surroundings, and in making your home a pleasing and interesting reflection of your personality. People will enjoy coming to your house,



not because of its impressive trappings and expensive adornments, but because so much of *you* is there. All homes should radiate the particular tastes, interests and attitudes of the family who lives there.

Maintaining a high standard of cleanliness is very important, but it should never become *all*-important. There is great virtue in being meticulous, in adding that extra touch of excellence to your efforts. But there is also room for caution here: in our zeal to achieve superior results in our work, we sometimes reach a point beyond which our performance can become slavish devotion to meaningless detail. The use of our time can, at this point, be downright inefficient and ineffective. We need to put first things first. Living is life . . . and we want to have as much of it as possible after housework.

It's essential to spend plenty of time with the kids. But children, and grown-ups too, need order in their lives. A feeling of contentment and well-being grows out of neatness and order rather than clutter and chaos. High self-esteem and achievement germinate in a quality environment, and no environment is more influential than the home. The atmosphere and condition of our homes have a great deal of influence on all of us. They have more power to affect lives than do film stars, prime ministers or professors.

The spirit of your home can touch and change not only the lives of all those who enter and all who live there, but it will also have an influence on your intimate personal relationships and your love for other people. Much of that enriched life is gained by developing and applying the principles of good organization and intelligent cleaning.

It is difficult for us to hide what we are, for our countenances generally betray our feelings. Most of our feelings are projected in the climate and conditions within the home. A woman, regardless of status, family size, age, or any of life's buffettings, will find it all worthwhile if her home is a sane, comfortable, orderly place.

Managing the home is usually a woman's responsibility, not necessarily because she is a woman but because no one else can do it. Some men think they can, but they can't. A woman has a power and influence no man ever will.

If mechanics were all that was involved in housework, a man might well be better for the job than you are. But when it comes to bringing out the charm of a room, or adding the beauty and special warmth that make a clean home more than just a clean house . . . well that transcends the realm of applied science or mechanics, and I'll admit without reservation . . . that takes a woman.

The good Lord knew what he was doing when he shoved men out into the world to plough the fields, sail the ships, operate the machines, and haggle in the business world. He knew that with a little brawn and some brains we men could be taught to handle those things.

But the home is where he needed the artists. That is where he needed the concentration of intellect and sensitivity and devotion and creativity. It was the home front that needed the real multifaceted managers and the natural diplomats.

In teaching, marriage counselling, and employing numerous people, I have found that women are special! In speaking assignments, for example, I've faced every size and type of audience imaginable, but every time I face an audience of

women, I feel a great deal of warmth and compassion. It is real and radiates from women whereas it doesn't from men. Many a philosopher and psychologist has tried to convince me that women are as mean, evil, scheming, and lazy as men, but I'm positive the philosophers are wrong. I grew up in a good home. My sister, my mother, aunts, and two grandmothers were all beautiful, positive people. I was eighteen before I ever heard a woman swear. The longer I live, the more apt I am to place women on a pedestal.

It is a delight and a marvel to see what a woman can do with a house. I'm continually in awe of a woman's ability to make things inviting with cheerful decorating ideas, plants and flowers, imaginative colour schemes, and all the special little touches that have such a pleasant and positive influence upon our moods and senses.

Pulpit, pedestal, or poetry cannot come as close to enriching the lives of

others as can a woman with a good, clean, happy, well-organized, well-disciplined life at home. Humankind needs examples of order and confidence. Both of these virtues can be superbly exemplified by a woman and a home. The home is the power lever of the world, and *you* control it. If you have not or are not now experiencing exhilaration from your role as a homemaker, it is possibly because your family has so much emotional and physical clutter that none of them can reach each other to give love and appreciation. There is no greater goal or achievement on the face of the earth than the opportunity to love and in turn be loved. Thrashing around in the clutter of the home too often thwarts the opportunity to achieve this.

You can change it. Then it will change you. You don't have to ask for love. You have the power to possess it and you will.

THERE IS LIFE AFTER HOUSEWORK!





Don A. Aslett

About the author

Don A. Aslett isn't just convinced that there is life after housework: he champions the belief that there is life everywhere every minute, and everyone has a total obligation to take full advantage of it. Since his birth in a small town in the US, Don has pursued every channel of opportunity available to him. Teachers wrote on his school report, 'He intensely takes over and never runs out of energy.' At the age of fifteen his parents taught and then assigned him to operate eighty acres of the family farm. He was actively involved in high school athletics and school government. When the town, the church, or the county fair needed a fund-raising production, Don — as a high school student — would take over and produce it. He left for university knowing how to work for other people, but found it unchallenging. And so he launched his own business career in cleaning, organizing a group of college students into a professional housecleaning and building maintenance operation called Varsity Contractors. Varsity Contractors is now a £5 million a year operation, with Don as its President.

Don's first love, writing, has never been dormant. Throughout years of building a family, career, and business, he has amassed volumes on a unique variety of subjects. Just a few years ago, he felt it time to begin to compile, publish, and market what he had written. In 1979, at the request of thousands of women who wanted his seminar information in writing, he wrote 'Is There Life After Housework?'.

Today, Don is senior stockholder in a leading maintenance firm and owner of a consulting company. He is a popular youth speaker and leader, devoting much of his time to family, church, and scouting. Don has held hundreds of house-cleaning seminars for enthusiastic audiences. He and his wife Barbara have six children.

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Some interesting ideas for presents



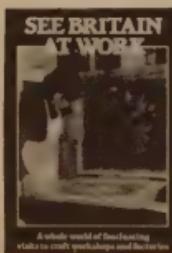
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Is there life after housework?

If someone promises to save you up to 75% of the time you now spend cleaning your home, it is quite a promise. And that's exactly what Don Aslett says he can do, in this extraordinary book. He promises to free you from most of the drudgery of housework, and give you back hours of time every week to spend on things that are more worthwhile.

Don, we believe, has written an immensely important book on what up to now might have seemed a boring subject – cleaning. And he is uniquely equipped to do so. He started cleaning for housewives 20 years ago to pay his way through university. He now heads one of the largest cleaning firms in the world, employing over 2,000 cleaners. He believes that women the world over get a very raw deal as things stand. They are working with tools that a professional cleaner would not give a second look at. So several years ago he set out to bring the benefits and efficiency of industrial methods into the home. He organised seminars involving thousands of women. He listened to every tip, every suggestion for improvement, and then spent thousands of hours testing . . . testing equipment, testing chemicals, testing methods.

As a result, when he says you can clean (really clean) a toilet and bathroom in 3½ minutes a day, he means it. When he says he can stop at source most of the dirt that habitually ends up on your carpets – he means it, and tells you how to save half an hour a day just by buying the right mats.

This book isn't exactly a Frederick Forsyth or a Catherine Cookson, but it is riveting in its own way because Don's methods are so obviously right – and they will give you back the one thing everyone seems to lack in this day and age – time. And nothing could be more valuable than that!

